

The
**DOWNFALL
of
RUSSIA**

HUGO GANZ

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~~Stella Speader, Penn.~~

THE DOWNFALL OF RUSSIA

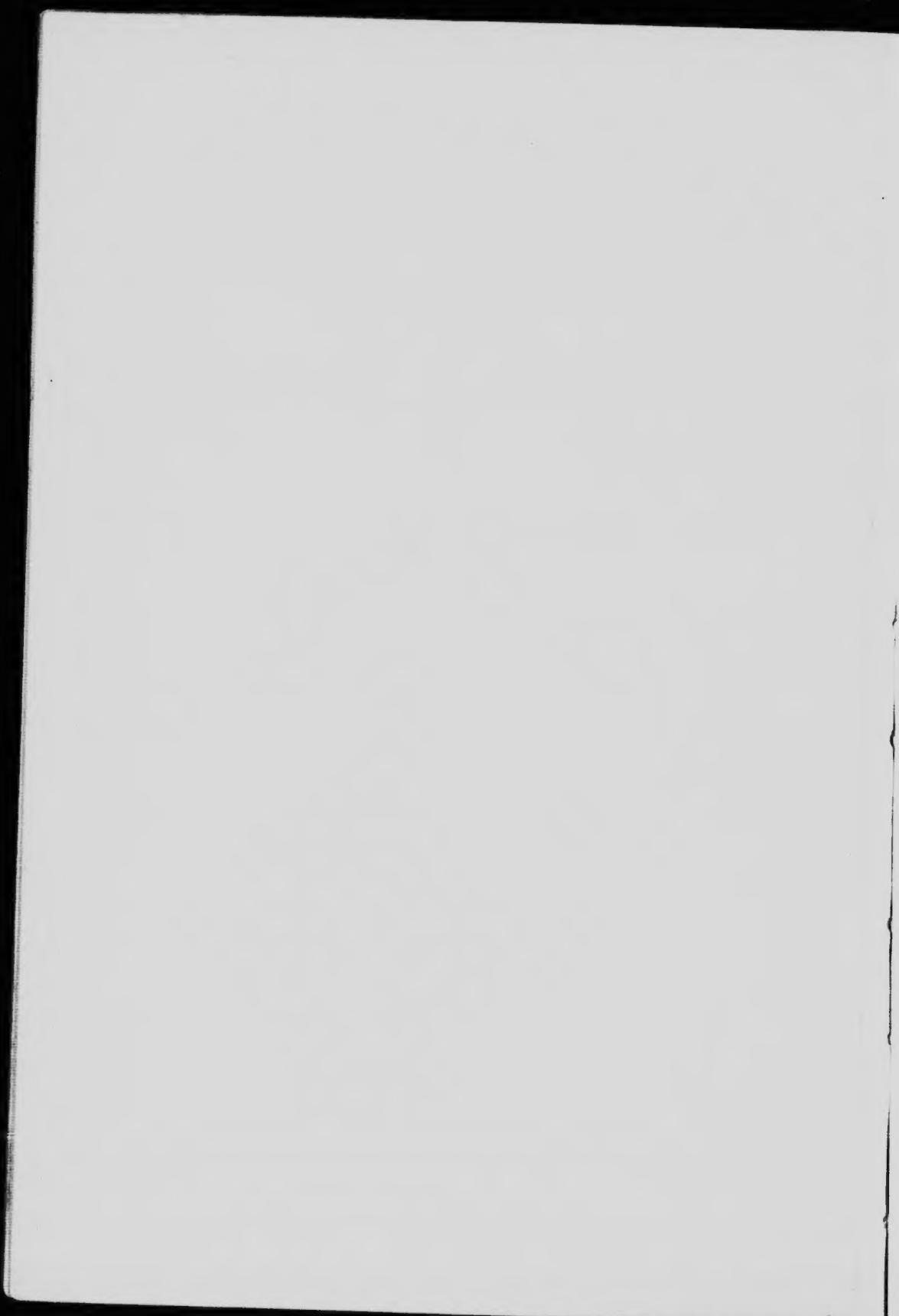
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THE
DOWNFALL OF RUSSIA,
UNDER THE SURFACE IN
THE LAND OF RIDDLES

BY
HUGO GANZ

DK
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G17
1905

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P R E F A C E

IN this volume is presented to English readers an unbiased description of the real state of affairs in Russia to-day. The sketches here brought together are the result of a special visit to Russia by Mr. Hugo Ganz, the well-known correspondent of Vienna, who was furnished with the best of introductions to the various circles of Russian society, and had thus exceptional opportunities to acquire reliable information.

Were not the reputation of the author and the standard of his informants alike absolutely above suspicion, it would seem incredible that such conditions as those depicted could exist in the twentieth century, in a country claiming a place among civilised nations. Indeed, whereas Japan has uncontestedly proved that she is emerging from the darkness of centuries, Russia is content to remain in a state of semi-barbarism, which might be looked for in the Middle Ages.

Since the sketches were written, the birth of an heir to the Imperial throne, and the assassination of Von Plehve, have altered Russian conditions to

a certain extent. But though the appointment of Sviatopolk Mirskiseems at first sight to afford ground for congratulation, it is evident that even with the best intentions the new Minister of the Interior will hardly be able to effect much amelioration until the entire system of the Russian Government is changed.

NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION

SINCE the publication of this work events in Russia have marched with an unforeseen and terrible rapidity. The accuracy of Mr. Ganz's descriptions and the soundness of his diagnosis have accordingly been subjected to the severest of all tests. No one can fail to be impressed by a prescience so remarkable. Even those pages which appeared to be most open to the charge of exaggeration now bear eloquent testimony to the writer's wisdom and moderation.

1905.

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CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF RIDDLES

Life and literature in Russia — National prejudice — The monstrous regimen of police—A State or a prison?—Russia's economic handicap.

SHORTLY before my departure from Vienna I chanced to meet an acquaintance of mine, a well-known author in Vienna.

"Are you really going to Russia?" said he. "I almost envy you, for it is to us a land of riddles. It has great artists and writers, and there is undoubtedly a highly educated upper stratum of the nation; at the same time it displays political conditions really barbarous in their backwardness. How can these co-exist? How is the maintenance possible, in the close proximity of comparatively free governments, of a régime which knows no personal liberty, no privacy of the mails, and in which there is but one master—namely, the police, and the police alone?"

"You are raising the very questions which lead me there," I replied. "We do not know Russia. We wonder at its great writers, but we cannot

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conceive how their greatness is possible under the existing conditions of public life, which remind one of a penitentiary rather than of a civilised State. And the question that persistently arises is whether our conception of these conditions corresponds to reality, or whether we are labouring under such a delusion as would befall one attempting to judge public life in Germany from the speeches of Herr Bebel and other Radicals. In truth, we know only the revolutionary literature of Russia ; and, as far as appearances go, it is hardly credible that a system such as that which it describes and brands for its *inhuman* wickedness can long retain the ascendency."

"You are going, then, without prejudices ?"

"I think I may say that I have none. We have long been cured of the notion that one and the same form of government may be prescribed as the only one leading to contentment in all times and in all countries. Deductive philosophy in political science has been replaced by inductive realistic philosophy, and a true understanding of existing conditions appears now to us of greater moment than the most beautiful ideals. Above all things, I feel myself free from the childish moral estimate of different political beliefs. One person may be at the same time a Conservative and a gentleman or a Radical and a knave, and *vice versa*. Should I come to the conclusion that Russian absolutism is or can be defended in good faith by upright Russian patriots there will be nothing to prevent my freely admitting

it. An unbiased observer should not be wedded to any doctrine."

"In that case I shall be doubly curious as to the results of your studies."

We parted.

I have given this characteristic conversation here because it demonstrates better than any introduction what the intelligent European is nowadays eager to discover about Russia, and what led me to the northern empire in the depth of winter, at the critical moment before the outbreak of a great war. That this war was imminent was then (at the beginning of January) apparent to every politician free from official bias. There was scarcely a foreboding of it in Russia itself. For me, however, that particular moment was of value, since it offered an opportunity to study for a short time Russian society, first in a state of calm, and then in the excitement which naturally followed the declaration of war. I made provision for both war and peace, and set out on my journey.

To be sure, I was not as light of heart as if I had been preparing to spend the winter on the Riviera or in Sicily. The climate had no terrors for me, for I knew that nowhere is one so well protected from the severity of the season as in the regions where ice and snow hold sway for at least one-third of the year. But it was the gorgon-headed Russian police that loomed before me threateningly. My aim in travel was the study of political conditions, the unreserved discussion of the existing state of affairs

with clear-sighted and well-informed persons. It was my purpose to record carefully my impressions and observations, and to report them to all who were interested in my studies. But we are told that all political conversation is forbidden in Russia. One may subject one's self and one's friends to great annoyance by allowing some meddlesome listener to catch accidentally a fragment of a political conversation. Writing and taking notes are even more dangerous, for the police open all letters, and they are not deterred by any conscientious scruples from confiscating the notes even of foreigners when they appear suspicious. Ambassadors and consuls are loth to engage in altercations with the Russian police, for statesmanship enjoins friendly relations with the Government of the powerful Russian empire, and when an inconvenient foreigner disappears somewhere in darkest Russia—as was the case with a French engineer who came in conflict with the police in a concert-hall and was never seen again—no one is disturbed by the incident. All these reflections were not cheering to me, especially as I was unfamiliar with the language of the country, and I wanted to return home with a whole skin and not without some result to show.

Here I would state that I did not experience the slightest annoyance throughout my entire journey. I was not subjected to police surveillance, nor did I notice in my meagre correspondence the least trace of police interference—the latter being probably due to the extreme precautions taken by me in send-

ing my letters in inconspicuous envelopes. And yet what a condition of things for a great country—that every traveller who wishes to enter its territory must arm himself with precautionary measures, as if he were preparing to visit a robber's den! Is it compatible with the usages of modern Europe, that no step may be taken in this country without one's being provided with documents of identification; that one may not cross the boundary either into or out of the country without the special permission of the consulate or of the police? Is Russia a State—or a prison? Is it a modern Tauris full of terrors to the stranger? I am not now speaking of the passport difficulties peculiar to Jews who, generally speaking, can hardly obtain entrance to holy Russia, and who, when they succeed in gaining admission, must be in constant dread of unpleasantness in every town and in every hotel. I merely ask whether it is compatible with the good name of a State that still wishes to exchange courtesies with neighbouring States to appear in the popular imagination as a ferocious monster ignoring right and moral obligations? How can trade and intercourse develop; how can the unimpeded flow of the sap of culture, the circulation of the national blood, take place in a land where terror guards the boundaries, and where the suspicion of arbitrariness impedes all progress? And what modern State or system of political government can maintain itself at a level corresponding to the modern requirements of its internal and external productive capacity without

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the unimpeded circulation of the sap of culture ? Are the advantages of an all-controlling police-system in any degree proportionate to its innumerable economic disadvantages ? Because an objectionable intruder occasionally comes into the land, and causes annoyance, is the whole country therefore to groan under a system to which such an evil reputation attaches ? It is a sheer impossibility to wash daily and hourly a hundred million people. Why are such enormous sacrifices made at all for the sake of an undertaking, injurious in itself, and, what is more, impossible of execution ?

Such are the thoughts that the traveller approaching the frontier cannot escape. I may here say, in advance, that the police could not prevent my holding conversations throughout Russia with men in various walks of life on subjects very objectionable to the police officials. Is there, then, any advantageous side to the evil repute that Russia is a prison where no man's life or property is secure ? The stranger does not know, before crossing the boundary, whether the police tyranny is really as inexorable as it is pictured and is believed to be abroad. But of this he is certain, that such an evil reputation does the country incalculable economic injury, and that a country with so bad a name can never be regarded as mature from the economic standpoint, to say nothing of political honour, to which, perhaps, there is a disposition to attach less value in the high places of autocratic rule.

CHAPTER II

WARSAW

I.

The frontier—The customs inspection—The great silence—
Pressed caviare—Polish society.

THE express-train is nearing the frontier at dawn. We are greeted by the sleeping-car conductor with the significant announcement, "We shall soon be in Russia"—an announcement which, it must be confessed, produces a slight palpitation of the heart. We are now at the gate of a mysterious country, with passport and baggage in the best of order. A Russian consulate had found us worthy to set foot upon the soil of holy Russia, and had explicitly stated that fact in our passport. Travellers may journey without this certificate through the five continents, but if unprovided with it may not set foot on Russian soil. We have no weapons save our five fingers, and, above all, not a single printed book or newspaper that might cause trouble at the frontier, only the harmless, invaluable

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Baedeker, for the importation of books, as we already knew at home, is put under severe ban in the domain of the Holy Synod. None the less, a slight palpitation of the heart, and a slight anxiety, are felt at the sight of a narrow bridge leading between two sentry-boxes over a narrow stream, and separating from each other two countries—nay, two civilisations. Shall we find favour in the eyes of the omnipotent gendarme, who enters our compartment with a polite bow, as we approach the station, and asks for our passport? May it not be that a secret police prohibition has preceded us, notwithstanding the regularity of our passport, and that it now precludes our entrance? Has not your pen sinned many a time against the knout and autocracy, and are you not, after all, if carefully examined, with all your scribbling, a thoroughly objectionable person in the eyes of the police—at least, when seen with Russian eyes?

But, thank heaven, the world is great and I am small. Russian censorship has not yet taken notice of all the sins of my pen; hence the same officer, with the same bow, returns to me my passport after the customs inspection. The holy Russian empire, from Warsaw to Vladivostok, is now exposed to my curious eyes.

The customs inspection was in itself a peculiar experience. The porter, a Pole with a good-natured, handsome face, takes our luggage and invites us with a friendly gesture to follow him to the great inspection hall. The hall is scrupulously clean, and

no loud talking is heard there. The passengers take their places on one side of the inspection-table, the porters on the other, the latter in orderly file with their caps in their hands. They communicate with one another only with their eyes. *Silence* has begun. I do not know whether it is purposely so, or whether it is merely incidental to the particularly strict local régime, that the implicit obedience, the silent subjection, and the irresistible power of despotism are here brought home so effectively to the stranger. But this impression remains with the traveller throughout the entire journey :—

“Be silent ; keep yourselves in curb—
We are watched in look and word.”

An empire of one hundred and thirty millions of prisoners and of one million gaolers—such is Russia ; and these gaolers understand no joke. It is a terrible machinery, this despotism, with all its wheels working one with the other. It is relentless and keen in all its mechanism. Henceforth no loud word shall be spoken. The official organs alone have a voice ; private persons may speak only in low tones.

But how orderly, politely, and neatly do the officials and porters execute the examination and forwarding of our baggage when despotism wishes to reconcile people to its threatening silence ! Only ten kopecks, turned into the common treasury, are asked for the handling of our large amount of baggage, and we are then led, together with the

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other travellers, to the Russian exit of the customs' inspection hall. After a short wait there the gate is opened, and at a given signal we are marched out of the hall in single file to refresh ourselves, before the departure of the train, with a little breakfast.

Scrupulous cleanliness reigns in the large, airy restaurant also. We are in the land of caviare. Caviare sandwiches, appetisingly prepared, lie on the buffet table. "Caviare" may also be found in one or another of the foreign papers offered for sale by the newsboys. When the censorship finds it inconvenient to eliminate entire pages whose contents are objectionable, it generously spreads printer's ink on the condemned passages, scatters sand o' them, and puts the whole in the press. The result is a lattice-like pattern, not unlike in appearance to pressed caviare, to which the Russian, with good-natured self-derision, applies the term "press-caviare," an expression which has a twofold meaning. Caviare is admittedly regarded as an easily digestible food. The Russian censor considers his caviare more useful and less harmful than that which ill-advised men in foreign countries allow themselves to print.

A few glasses of tea drawn from a samovar drive away the last traces of the morning frost, and, wrapped in fur coats, and with a feeling like that succeeding an adventure crowned with victory, we for the first time stroll along a Russian railway platform.

We again enter the compartment, now in charge of Russian attendants.

A long, monotonous ride through level, swampy country, over which there slowly floats the grey smoke of the engine, finally brings us at dusk to Warsaw.

Nothing oppresses the spirit more deeply than such a ten-hour monotony of leaden-grey skies, dirty-grey snow, and a thick, grey smoky mist. The gendarmes in grey coats at the infrequent stations ; the 'ev Jews with their long coats of uncertain colour, the secret police with their equivocal suav..., never absent—all these are not calculated to relieve the painful feeling of sadness and dreariness. We were out of humour when we reached Warsaw. We believed that we had the right to expect crisp winter weather in Russia and were disappointed to find only mud and humidity. But perhaps Warsaw is not really Russia ? Or are we still in Central Europe ? The evening at the hotel and the following days conclusively proved to us that Warsaw, indeed all Poland, with its climate, its civilisation, its religion, and—its ideas, does not belong, in the real sense of the term, to Russia ; that the isotherm which connects Russia proper with other regions of the same mean temperature runs considerably north of Poland. A Buckle would be puzzled by this fact alone. The inhabitants could not be of the same race here nor could the same order of things be possible. When, nevertheless, only one power rules over all, it does so by

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violence and in spite of natural laws ; it must give rise to resentment and can give no promise of permanence.

On my return journey from the heart of Russia I purposely suppressed the first impression gained by me in Warsaw, but when I was there again this impression reasserted itself even more strongly. Warsaw is no more Russia than Lemberg or Dresden, in spite of the overpowering Russian churches, in spite of the innumerable Russian officers and soldiers, in spite of the obligatory Russian signs on the stores, which, with some experience, may be deciphered as "Chajim Berlinerblau" or something similar.

Apart from its jargon-speaking Jews, Warsaw is pre-eminently a Roman Catholic city and its entire civilisation is Roman Catholic. Its very situation is striking. Approaching it from the Vistula, one may see how the city had built its defences—towards the East ! Thence came the enemy, the Mongol, the Russian. From the East there came barbarism and oppression, therefore the fortifications and walls were built on the river-bank commanding the valley of the Vistula through which alone an enemy could come.

Warsaw is a beautiful and fashionable city when considered apart from the sections where the Jews are crowded together. The members of its elegant society know how to live in spite of national misery and oppression. The Hôtel Bristol, the finest hotel in the city, is their rendezvous. Here they meet one

another at breakfast, at dinner, in the splendid English dining-room ; men and women, guests from Prussian-Poland and Galicia, noble families of the partitioned kingdom. They are of one race, one class, one caste. They know one another, like members of the same club, and all approximate to the same type—somewhat overslender forms, long, nervous hands, finely sculptured noses, sharply chiselled temples, angular foreheads, the women supple and lissom, each motion accompanied by a touch of polished affectation. When compared with this Polish aristocracy, the Russian officers, who eat at separate tables, leave the impression, with their German scholar-faces or Cossack physiognomies, of provincial backwardness. They are merely *bourgeoisie* in uniform even though they are real princes, while the Pole who has graduated from that high school of refinement, the Jesuit boarding-school, is an aristocrat, a cavalier, from head to foot. They are as separate as oil and water. The Russian, even though he is the master, is of no consequence here. One need only observe for a single hour from some corner of the elegant dining-room of the Hôtel Bristol the behaviour of the Polish society and the complete isolation of the Russian officers or officials ; one need only be able to distinguish the groups from one another—the Baltic nobility with their almost *bourgeois* families, merchants from all the principal countries, Russian officials, and Polish society—and it will at once become clear who is at home here, firmly rooted to the soil, so that all others are really

but strangers and intruders ; it is the Poles and the Poles alone.

There is some talk of a change of relations that has been attempted through the Vatican with the aid of the French ally, namely, to array Poland against Protestant Prussia and to reconcile it to Orthodox Russia. Indeed, the Russian Government has found it necessary to allow religious instruction in secondary schools to be given in the Polish mother-tongue, just at the time when the German Government had on its hands the Wreschen trials. In fact, the more Prussian narrowness insults and provokes the Poles the greater are the Russian efforts to win them over. This, however, is only a political move, an attempt at bribery that the Poles let pass because it suits them, though one, perhaps, that the real go-betweens, the Jesuits, take in earnest. Yet the success of such a move would be, after all, contrary to all known facts of history and civilisation, for it would be opposed to the national sentiment. In Russia dwells the marrow of the Polish nation ; in Russia dwells the Polish aristocracy and that industrial middle class which has become rich and Polish in spirit in so far as it was of foreign origin ; and yet in this homogeneous land of Poland the Polish language is interdicted, so to speak, and tolerated everywhere only as a local dialect. University, *gymnasiums*, courts, and administrative bodies are all Russian—a Gessler hat, placed in the Russian signboard of every shop, on which the Latin - Polish inscription may appear only

in a secondary position — a proceeding to which no self-respecting people will submit, and need not submit, especially from a master whose so-called civilisation is of far more recent origin than its own. The German in America becomes Americanised voluntarily and irresistibly, because the English language is recognised as a more useful medium than his own, as, in fact, the world-language. The Pole will never become Russianised as long as he remains on Polish soil ; and no matter how significantly the "Ausgleichspolen" (Polish compromise party) flirt with the Russian régime, such an attitude merely veils a sense of annoyance and is not caused by real fellow-feeling. For the Germanisation of the Pole is like an ill-fitting garment that pinches ; Russianisation, on the other hand, is a thorn in the flesh that makes it fester and throws the entire system into a fever.

CHAPTER III

WARSAW

II.

Introduction—Lazienki—The Jewish quarter.

POLITICAL reflections force themselves on you in this subjugated but by no means pacified country. It is in vain you tell yourself that the constant factors of climate, soil, race, and religion are of greater importance for the true understanding of a country, city, or people than passing political incidents and systems. You cannot emancipate yourself from politics in Poland. This is not a country like German Alsace, where, according to Moltke, a guard must be kept for fifty years, after which, like the German country it originally was, it will again become and remain German. Poland is a country forcibly subjected and conquered, and you feel it when walking the streets and in the fashionable hotel, where the national sorrow is generously moistened with champagne at the tables of the aristocracy even at the early luncheon hour.

However, it is not necessary for us to be more passionately patriotic and political than these champagne counts, and we must attempt to secure something of the street scenes without becoming involved too deeply in political problems.

Whenever I come to a town I ask myself, Why was it built here and not elsewhere ? With the help of a little imagination one can understand even to-day how Warsaw came into existence. It was at the head of a bridge. The word "Warsaw" is believed to be derived from the word "Warszain" (on the height). So the city lies at a height of about forty metres on the bank of the Vistula fully half a kilometre wide at this place. An elevation of forty metres on the immediate bank of a broad stream offered, at the time of its foundation in the twelfth century, a natural fortification, and the merchants who came up from the sea to sell their wares to the semi-barbarous inhabitants of the plain may have found perhaps on this height a frequent protection from the attacks of the dwellers in the plain. Later the fort became a city, and culture and luxury made their appearance, offering to the submissive dwellers of the plains and to the landed proprietors from far and near the opportunity of squandering the proceeds of their crops. In those days the numerous churches did not fare badly in the days of penitence.

To-day Warsaw is still a fine city of broad streets paved with wooden blocks, with rows of stores on both sides, prominent among which are the

luxuriously equipped jewellery establishments. The traffic is considerable, though it cannot compare with that in St. Petersburg. Just now the main artery of the city, the Vistula, is closed. The stream is frozen over almost its entire width, and crows croak on the snowy shoals. But within the city there pass unceasingly modestly neat *einspänner*, fashionable cabs, and splendid private carriages in Russian harness and with Russian servants. The buildings are of little interest. A few attempts in the Russian style, a few Polish touches of modern *secession* architecture strike the foreigner, but the deepest impression is created by the feverish life on the streets and not by its ornamental framework.

The *Lustschloss Lazienki*, with its quaint park situated at the end of the avenue, forms, however, an exception. Even snow and ice cannot banish the spirits that possess one in these gardens. It is a miniature Versailles. Here is a little castle within which is a picture-gallery of aristocratic beauties, statues, and portraits of King Stanislas Poniatowski represented mythologically as King Solomon entering Jerusalem; without are enchanting villas scattered throughout the park, in the centre of which is a little natural theatre built in the open, of stone, and arranged like an amphitheatre, separated from the stage by an arm of the wide pond, the stage itself constructed of Corinthian columns with a shrubbery in the background. Plays were given here in the days when the court and the "beauties" of the picture-gallery enjoyed nature and art together.

Moonlight was indispensable, and fireworks were burned for the entertainment of the aristocracy and royalty. Meanwhile the kingdom hastened to its ruin ; for a witty, pleasure-loving court and an immoral oligarchy together are too much for any people, especially when it is surrounded by covetous neighbours. A hundred years of slavery and the ruthlessly suppressed revolutions are the historical penalty for the pleasures of Castle Lazienky. There, and in the southern part of the town, where the "schlachzitz" (lordling) could deposit his "liberum veto" for a couple of roubles or thalers, the kingdom was destroyed, and its resurrection is a pious wish, the fulfilment of which even our grandchildren will not live to see.

I have no faith in a Polish kingdom. There may be a Polish revolution to-morrow, perhaps, when the Russian meets defeat in Eastern Asia, as the Russian patriots hope, but a Polish kingdom there will never be. It is quite apparent how the influence of the times is changing the entire social structure of the people. No nation can maintain itself without a middle class, and Poland still has no middle class. The material for such a class—the strong Jewish population—has been so ground down that a half-century would not be sufficient for its restoration, and the Russian régime of to-day tends to anything rather than to the uplifting and the education of the Polish Jewry. It is stated that there are in Warsaw a quarter of a million Jews, a few well-to-do people among them, who have

hastened, for the most part, to transform themselves into "Poles of the Mosaic faith," without disarming thereby the clerical anti-Semitism of the Polish people, and innumerable beggars or half-beggars, who are designated in Western Europe as "schnorrer." And of these there are in Warsaw an unknown number. It is hard to draw the line between the "schnorrer" and the "Luft-mensch" (a man without any certain source of income), who has not yet resigned himself to beggary, and yet cannot tell in the morning whence he is to draw his sustenance at noon. These include artisans, victims of the sweating system, agents and brokers, a city proletariat of the very worst kind. I have seen no such shocking misery in the Jewish quarters on the Moldau as I encountered in the brilliant capital of Warsaw. The Polish Jew, everywhere despised and unwelcome, is a wandering evidence of the poverty caused by Polish mismanagement. A system that succeeds in depraving the sober, pious, and sexually disciplined orthodox Jew to the extent observed in a portion of the Jewish-Polish proletariat should be granted the palm of being the most useless system on the face of the earth. In the last analysis it was the Polish "schlachzitz," and the Polish clerical going hand-in-hand with him, that constituted the prime cause of all the miseries of the nineteenth century.

And yet, to be just, one should compare this cheerless Polish-Jewish proletariat with its immediate

environment—the Polish peasants and the common people. Here one would still find a balance of virtues on the Jewish side. The wretched Polish peasant is not more cleanly than the Jew. On the contrary, he lives in the same room with his pig, and no ritual requirement compels him to wash his body at least once a week. The Jew, under his patched garment, is for the most part comparatively clean, only hopelessly stunted and emaciated. The Jew does not drink, while his "master," the Pole, has a kindly disposition towards all sorts of spirituous liquors. Only lately has the chastity of the Jewish women yielded to the pressure of endless misery or the temptations of the cities, while of the higher classes of Polish and Russian society but little of an exemplary character has been told. And finally—

"Deutsche Redlichkeit suchst Du in allan Winkeln vergebens."

Goethe's verse applies not only to the Italians, for whom it was intended ; it applies also to Poland and Russia, where less faith is attached to one's word than is customary with us, and it applies, above all, to the merchant classes of all nations that are wont to make their living by overreaching their neighbours. There is a wide gulf between the development of commercial ethics, as they are understood in Germany and England, and the tricks and devices of the petty trade of this or that nation. But the Jews in Poland and in Russia have been and still

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are being forced to become, in great measure, a class of wretched petty traders. Drastic regulations force back those who would fain escape from their bondage and from an occupation of dubious morality.

The Jewish section is the "partie hon. use" of the beautiful Polish capital ; the Jewish misery is a shameful stain on Polish rule and is its nemesis. All the five continents must have their misery and toil, and they need a firm, all-embracing humanity to relieve them of their contagious wretchedness, their residue of centuries of depravity. But for Poland and Russia the humane solution of the Jewish question is a matter of life or death.

CHAPTER IV

ST. PETERSBURG

Russian railways—First impressions of the city—Carnivals and congresses—A pageant of Europe and Asia—Horses and sleighs—Barbaric magnificence.

I.

A HYMN of praise to the Russian railroad ! The Russian tracks begin at Warsaw to have a considerably broader bed. This is for a strategical purpose, to render the invasion by European armies more difficult. It is also a benefit to the traveller, for the Russian carriages are wider and more comfortable than the European, and the corridors beside the compartments are very convenient for little walks during the journey. A separate refreshment compartment and buffet, with the indispensable samovar, where one may secure a glass of tea at any time, are situated in the centre of the long car. The trains do not jolt, although they are almost as fast as ours. The smoke and soot do not drive through the tightly closed double windows. A twenty-four hour trip here tires one less than a six-hour trip with us.

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Certainly there is more need of preparation for a comfortable journey in Russia than in the West. The distances are immense, a twenty-four hour journey causing no remark. The Warsaw-Petersburg train was as well filled as the ordinary express train between Frankfort and Cologne.

The run, which lasts from one morning to the next, is naturally not very entertaining. The broad expanse of snowy plain, relieved only by snow-breaks and frozen swamps; at every two miles a few wretched half-Asiatic huts; and occasionally the dark profile of a forest—no more to be seen: and a sea of unintelligible Slavic sounds—no more to be heard. The feeling of loneliness grows upon one, and the impression becomes constantly stronger that Russia is a world for itself.

But there is an end to everything, even to a railroad journey without books, without papers, and without conversation. At the dawn of the clear, wintry day one may already distinguish the signs of a great city. A station with magnificent buildings and a well-cared-for park stretching almost to the rails claims our attention after the many unimpressive sights of the long road. We decipher the name "Gatschina," and understand why there is such a strong police force on the platform. This is the Winter Palace. Less than a hour later the gilded cupolas stand out bright above the snow; the brakes are put on; we are in St. Petersburg.

It cannot be said that the city appears in a favourable light when viewed from the railroad. The not

over-elegant two-horse vehicle which takes us and our baggage, rattles over miserably paved streets, dirty from the melting snow, through broad, endless suburban thoroughfares. The houses on either side are of only one story, built mostly of wood, their poverty-stricken appearance being intensified here and there by three-storyed flats that look like barracks. Gin shops, little all-store shops, wooden huts with putrid garbage follow one another in a variety by no means pleasing. The passers-by, ill-clad, with the inevitable "goloshes," shuffle along the slushy pavements; waggons with two or sometimes three horses, their necks bent under the brightly painted Russian "duga" (wooden yoke), complete a truly Gorki atmosphere. You can scarcely believe that you are entering one of the most brilliant cities of the continent. The endless rows of shops, which one passes on the way to the centre of the city, but slightly improve one's first impression, for even they are far removed from the splendour one expects in a large town.

We finally reach the hotel to which our letters have been addressed. It is an enormous structure, more than two hundred yards long. Yet it has no room for us. It is filled to overflowing. It is impossible to crowd in any one else. We get into our carriage again. We drive from one hotel to another, growing constantly more modest in our demands for lodging. But our efforts are all in vain. Everything is occupied to the very gables.

We were careless in coming to St. Petersburg in

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January. This is the time of congresses, of business, of carnivals. All the provincial officials are here to render their annual reports to their ministries. Naturally, they bring with them their families, who wish to make their important purchases here and to enjoy the social season. Congresses and conferences are held here not in the summer and vacation months as with us, but shortly before the "butter-week," really a carnival, the pleasure of which people wish to take this opportunity of enjoying. Medical, teachers', and insurance congresses are held here at the same time. Foreign merchants come here to complete their transactions. But the great city of St. Petersburg is not adapted to foreign guests.

The instincts of self-defence awake at the time of need. We do not intend to camp to-night under the bridge arch. We make great efforts and by the evening have secured a room, in spite of the "absolute impossibility," in that large and only comfortable hotel in St. Petersburg, which we shared with a friendly little mouse, but which was free from other objectionable tenants. Even the little mouse was deprived in a base manner of its life and liberty the very next night. Once provided with board and lodging, we decided to become acquainted with the better side of St. Petersburg. What does a foreigner usually do in the evening when he visits a strange foreign city? He goes to some theatre.

There are plenty of hotel porters and agents to provide for the wishes of the guests. "Here, agent; get me tickets for the Imperial Theatre—where a

ballet of Tschaikowski's is to be performed to-night in first-class style." The theatre ticket, obligingly furnished with a French translation, informs us that among others, Kscheschinska will do herself the honour of playing the leading rôle. "But, sir, that is quite impossible ; firstly, because this is the carnival time ; secondly, because most of the seats are already subscribed for ; and thirdly, because Kscheschinska dances to-night"—a sly wink of the left eye accompanies the mention of the name—"and neither the Emperor nor the court will be absent from the theatre. Unless you pay twenty to thirty roubles to a jobber you will hardly get into the theatre."

Since my passion for the ballet or for Kscheschinska does not attain the proportions of a twenty-rouble investment, I find it preferable to devote the evening to the always interesting and fruitful hotel studies. What seething life in the numberless corridors, dining-halls, and vestibules of the fashionable St. Petersburg hotel ! Governors in generals' gold-braided uniforms, covered with so many orders and medals that it makes one curious to find out about all the deeds of heroism for which they were bestowed ; lords-in-waiting of refined elegance, in their court dress hiding the "beau restes" of the former Adonis ; tall, agile, dark-eyed Circassians with the indispensable cartridge-pouch on the breast region of their long coats, with the dagger hanging in its massive gold sheath from the tightly drawn belt ; Cossacks with fur caps a foot

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high, made of white or black Angora skins, placed on their bristly heads ; a nimble Chinese man—or maid—servant, with long pigtail, whose sex it is impossible to distinguish ; a whole troop of dark-eyed Khivanese squatting on their prayer-rugs before the apartment of their khan, passing the nargile from hand to hand, and exchanging witticisms about the passing European ladies ; beardless Tartar waiters shuffling by in their flat-soled shoes—display a mixture of Europe and Asia such as may hardly be seen together in any other part of the world. The west European merchants and other travellers, who throng the hotel, are scarcely noted among these exotic personages. In this hotel, as elsewhere throughout St. Petersburg, the European civilian is seemingly merely tolerated. The city belongs to the functionaries, soldiers, and officials, lords-in-waiting, to the Cossacks, Circassians, and, above all others, to the police. A more intimate acquaintance reveals that a goodly portion of the people in uniform in St. Petersburg are ordinary students, technologists, professors, &c., and that these people in uniform do not equally represent the State. On the contrary, the conflict between the State, or, to be more precise, between the police and the free professions, would not be so bitter if the members of the latter were not entitled to wear uniform. As it is, there is a dreadful possibility of the common people taking them as representatives of the Czar's authority.

We slept through the night. Kind fate had de-

creed for us snow and cold in place of the disagreeable thaw, and we availed ourselves of the clear weather to become acquainted with the bright side of St. Petersburg. And, first of all, the snow ! It changes the entire appearance of the city as if by a magic wand. The narrow, open carriages in which only two persons can accommodate themselves with difficulty, especially when wrapped in fur coats, have disappeared. Their places have been taken by small, low sleighs without backs. The "izwozchik" (driver) in his blue, plaited Tartar fur coat and multicoloured sash, with fur-trimmed plush cap on his head, sits almost in the passenger's lap. Yet there is compensation for the meagre dimensions of the sleigh. The small, shaggy horses speed along like arrows through the straight streets, urged on by the caressing words or the exclamations of the bearded driver. Horse, driver, and sleigh are very important figures in the St. Petersburg street scenes. We at home cannot at all realise how much driving is done in St. Petersburg. The distances are enormous ; streets five or six kilometres long are not unusual. There are hardly any tram lines, thanks to the selfishness of the town representatives, composed of St. Petersburg house-owners, who do not care to see a reduction in rents in the central portion of the town. The average city inhabitant readily parts with the thirty, forty, or fifty kopecks demanded by the "izwozchik," and thus everything is hurried along in an unending race. The "pravo" (night) or "hei beregis !" (look out !), which the

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drivers bawl to one another or to the pedestrians, resounds through the streets, but they are not very effectual. One must open his eyes more than his ears if he wishes to escape injury in the streets of St. Petersburg. The constant racing often results in four or five rows of speeding conveyances attempting to pass one another. The drivers with their bearded, apostle faces, which appear lamb-like when they good-naturedly invite you to enter their conveyances, are like wild men when let loose. Their Cossack nature then asserts itself. On and always on, and let the poor pedestrian take care of his bones himself. And however much the little horse may pant and the flakes of foam may fly from its sides, "his excellency," "the count," "his highness" (the "izwozchik" is extremely generous with his titles), will surely add a few kopecks when the driver has been very smart; and so the little horse must run until the passenger, unaccustomed to such driving, loses his breath.

But the Russian's barbarian conception of wealth and fashion is to make a driver race even when out for a pleasure drive, as if it were a question of life or death. The numberless private carriages distinguished by their greater elegance, their splendid horses, harness, liveries, and appointments, go at an even greater speed than that of the hackney coaches, thanks to their fleet, high-stepping Arab trotters. And now imagine twenty-five thousand such vehicles simultaneously in racing motion, with here and there a jingling "troika," its two

outer horses galloping madly and the middle horse trotting furiously ; imagine, at the same time, the bright colours of the four-cornered plush caps on the heads of the stylish drivers, the gay-coloured rugs on the "troikas," the blue and green covers on the galloping horses of the private sleighs, the glitter of the gold and silver harness, the scarlet coats of the court coachmen and lackeys, everything rushing along on a crisp, winter day, over the glimmering, freshly fallen snow, between the mighty façades of imposing structures, flanked by an almost unbroken chain of tall policemen and gendarmes—and you have the picture of the heart of St. Petersburg at the time of social activity. Splendour, riches, wildness, are all caricatured on a magnificent scale as if calculated to impress and to frighten. Woe to him here who is not of the ruling class !

CHAPTER V

ST. PETERSBURG

II.

Why St. Petersburg is the capital—Autocrat and priest—A vista of palaces—Boyar-millionaires—Priests and policemen—Popular attitude towards the priests—The glamour of the Greek Church—The friendship of France and its results.

ST. PETERSBURG is an act of violence. **S**have never received in any city such an impression of the forced and the unnatural as in this colossal prison or fortress of the Russian's mighty rule. The Neva, around whose islands the city is clustered, is really not a stream. It comes from nowhere and leads nowhere. It is the efflux of the Heaven-forsaken Lodoga Lake, where no one has occasion to search for anything ; and it leads into the Bay of Finland, which is frozen throughout half the year. Neither commercial considerations, nor even strategical reasons, can justify the establishment of this capital at the mouth of the Neva. The fact that St. Petersburg has none the less become a

city of millions of inhabitants is due entirely to the barbaric energy of its founder, Peter the Great, an energy which still works in the plastic medium of Russian national character. On the bank of the Neva stands the equestrian statue of Peter, raised on a mighty block of granite, a notable work of the Frenchman Falconet. The face of the Emperor as he ascends the rock is turned to the north-west, where lived his most dangerous rival, the Swedish Charles. And just as his whole attitude expresses defiance and self-conscious power, so his city, St. Petersburg, is only a monument of the defiance and the iron will of its founder. Russian historians relate that Peter intended, by removing his residence to St. Petersburg, to facilitate the access of European civilisation to the Russian people. If this be true Peter utterly failed in his purpose. The old commercial city, Riga, would have answered the purpose much better. To be sure Riga did not come into Russian possession until eighteen years after the founding of St. Petersburg. But what was there to prevent the despot from abandoning the work that he had begun ? No, St. Petersburg was to bid defiance to the contemporary might of Sweden, and so forty thousand men had to work for years in the swamps of the Neva to build the mighty tyrant's castles, the Peter-and Paul fortress, an immense stone block on the banks of the icy stream. Malarial fevers carried off most of them ; but the Russian people supplied more men, for such was the will of the Czar. The drinking-water of St. Petersburg to-day is still

a yellow, filthy fluid, the taking of which is sure to bring on typhoid fever ; but the will of Peter still works, and St. Petersburg remains the capital.

Peter, with his peculiar blending of political despotism and uncultured caprice, built for himself a little house on the fortress island, where the furniture made by himself is still preserved by the side of the miracle-working image of the Redeemer which the despot always carried with him. His spirit presides over this city and this land. For what he did not entirely depend on to his unscrupulous fist he left in honest bigotry to the bones of the holy Alexander Nevski, which he had brought to his capital soon after its establishment. Autocrat and priest still reign in the Russian empire. The Peter-and-Paul fortress, in the subterranean vaults of which many of the noblest hearts and heads of Russia have found their grave, the Isaac Cathedral, with its barbarian pomp of gold and precious stones, and the mighty monoliths—these are the symbols of the city of St. Petersburg and of its régime. If there is in Russia, even among the enlightened minds, something like a fanatical hatred of civilisation and of the West, it is due to the manner in which the half-barbarian Peter imposed Western ideas and civilisation on a harmless and good-natured people.

What orutal power of will can do in defiance of unfriendly nature has been done on the banks of the Neva. Indeed, its green waters are now hidden by an ice-crust three feet thick over which the

sleighs run a race with the little cars of the electric railway. Yet even without the restless shimmer of the water the view of the river-bank is still very impressive. The golden glitter of the great cupolas of the Isaac Cathedral, the loud red front of the Winter Palace, the pale yellow columns of the Admiralty, between light green Renaissance structures, stand out prominently.

Palace after palace stretches along the stream right up to the Field of Mars. The gilded spire of the Peter-Paul Cathedral pierces the white-blue sky and greets, with its angel balanced on the extreme spire, the equally grotesque high spire of the Admiralty. Great stone and iron bridges span the broad stream, its opposite shore almost faded in the light mist of the wintry day. Walking towards the middle of the bridge, whence a splendid view may be obtained, one sees the long row of buildings on the farther islands standing out of the mist. One row of columns is followed by another—the Academy of Arts, the Academy of Sciences, the house of Menschikoff, which Catherine built for her favourite, all come into view. Towards the west the hulls of vessels loom up from among the docks. Still farther out the mist hides the shoals of the Neva, together with those of the Gulf of Finland, in an impenetrable grey. Towards the north stretch the endless avenues with their bare branches which lead to the islands. This is the Bois de Boulogne of St. Petersburg, where the gilded youth race in brightly decorated "troikas" and hasten to

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squander in champagne, card playing, and gipsy entertainments, the wages of the starved moujik. It is a magnificent picture of power, of self-conscious riches, the better part of which is furnished by the mighty stream itself.

It is easy now to realise that St. Petersburg was originally planned for a seaport, and that it therefore presents its glittering front to the sea. The railways which conduct the traffic to-day were not originally able to penetrate with their stations into the city proper ; hence the visitors of to-day must first pass through the broad, melancholy suburban girdle which gives one the impression of a giant village. When access to the city was still by boat from the Gulf of Finland, the landing at the "English quay," with its view of all these colossal structures, golden domes and spires, must have created a powerful impression. Nothing less was contemplated by this massing of palaces. The capital and residence city was not intended to facilitate the access of the West but rather to inspire the West with awe.

The splendour of the city naturally becomes gradually diminished from the banks of the Neva towards the vast periphery. The main artery of traffic in St. Petersburg, the "Nevski Prospect," and its continuation, the "Bolshaya Morskaya," remain stately and impressive to their very end. A peculiar feature of St. Petersburg is the numerous canals which begin and end at the Neva, and which once served to drain the swampy soil of the city. They

are now to be filled, for they no longer answer that purpose. Nevertheless, they offer meanwhile an opportunity for pretty bridge structures, as, for instance, the one leading over the Fontanka ornamented with four groups of the horse-tamers by Baron Klodt. A comparison with the lagoon city, Venice, would really be a flattering hyperbole, for one does not get the impression here of being on the sea as in the case of the "Canal-Grande." The city rather reminds one of the models that were nearer to its founder, the canal-furrowed cities of Holland. Still these canals are a pleasant diversion in the otherwise monotonous pictures of the city streets.

Should it be mentioned here that St. Petersburg has its "millionnaya" (millionaire's street)? It is well known that to St. Petersburg and Moscow flow the treasures of a country squeezed dry. The great wealth of the one almost presupposes the nameless misery of the other. The indifference with which the shocking famine conditions of entire provinces and the threatening economic collapse of the whole empire are regarded here finds its explanation only in the bearing of these boyar-millionaires, who consider themselves Europeans because their valets are shaved in the English fashion.

The eye of the stranger who wishes to understand, and not merely to gaze, will rather turn to other phenomena more characteristic of the country and its people than splendid buildings.

There is, in the first place, the priest, and then the policeman.

The priests and the policemen are the handsomest persons in St. Petersburg. Although the flowing hair of the bearded priests, reaching to their shoulders, is not to be regarded as a characteristic peculiarity, since every third man in Russia displays long hair or profuse locks that would undoubtedly draw to their fortunate possessor in our land the attention of the street boys, still they are carefully chosen human material, tall, graceful men with handsome head and proud mien. Notwithstanding this they are accorded but little reverence even among the bigoted Russians, for no matter how often these may cross themselves before every sacred image, they quite often experience behind the priest's back a feeling of salivation which compels them suddenly to empty their mouths in a very demonstrative manner. This may be due to various kinds of superstition, which regard the meeting with a priest as very undesirable, but it finds its explanation also in the not always exemplary life of this servant of the Lord. He is especially accredited with a decided predilection for various distilled liquors that at times exert a doubtful influence on a man's behaviour. One may see in St. Petersburg men wrapped in costly sable furs make the acquaintance of the street pavements, especially during the "butter-week;" yet for spiritual garments the gutter is even less a place of legitimate rest, and, at any rate, it is difficult to acknowledge as the appointed interpreter of God's will a man whose mouth savours of an entirely different spirit from the "Spiritus Sanctus."

For all this, however, the Russian is filled, outwardly at least, and during Divine service, with a devotion which to us is scarcely comprehensible. With fanatical fervour he kisses in church the hand of the same priest behind whose back he spat at the church door. His body never rests. As with the Orthodox Jew and the howling Dervish, his praying consists in an almost unceasing bowing, and a not at all inconsiderable exhibition of gymnastics. He is perpetually crossing himself. Particularly fervent suppliants, women especially, can hardly satisfy themselves by kissing again and again the stone flags of the floor, the hem of the priest's coat, the sacred images, and the numberless relics. But how effective and mind-ensnaring is the Orthodox Church service! The glimmer of the innumerable small and large wax candles brought by mos. of the congregation fills the golden mist of the place with an unearthly light. Rubies, emeralds, and diamonds shine from the silver and gold crowns on the sacred images. The gigantic priest in his gold-embroidered vestments lets his deep, powerful bass voice sound, and wonderful choirs answer him from either side. Clouds of incense float through the high nave. The "believers," ranged one after another, intoxicate and carry one another on by their devotion—a huge general hypnosis in which education and priestly art are equally concerned. The Orthodox cult is not to be compared, at least in my opinion, with that of the Roman Catholics in the depth and nobility of the music and

in the artistic arrangement of the service. But in its archaic monotony, in its use of the coarsest material stimuli, it is perhaps even more suggestive for the Eastern masses than is the other for the civilised peoples of the West. The quantity of gold, silver, and precious stones offered up, especially in the Isaac Cathedral and in the Kazen Cathedral—fashioned after that of St. Peter's in Rome—to give the "believers" a conception of the just claims of heaven on treasure and reverence, is beyond the belief of Europeans. The artistically excellent silver ornaments of the Isaac Cathedral weigh not less than eleven thousand kilogrammes. A single copy of the New Testament is bound in twenty kilogrammes of gold. The sacred image made in commemoration of the catastrophe of Borki is almost entirely covered with diamonds. These endowments came, for the most part, from members of the Imperial house. The union of Church and State is more intimate here than elsewhere, and, apparently, even more profitable for the guardians of the altar. Among all the sacred relics and trophies of the St. Petersburg church one impresses the foreigner above the others. It is a collection of silver gifts from the French, ranged along the wall of the Peter-and-Paul Cathedral. By the side of the coffins of the Russian Emperors and Empresses, from Peter the Great to Alexander III., which one cannot pass without a peculiar feeling of historical emotion, under innumerable flags and war trophies, there stand, as the greatest triumph that the despotic barbarian State

has won from civilised Europe, the silver crowns and the shields of honour which Felix Faure, Casimir Pérrier, the Senate, the Chamber of France, and the Parisian press presented to their Russian ally.

"You see here the greatest misfortune that has befallen us in this century," said my companion, an Orthodox Russian of nothing less than Radical views. "Until then, until this alliance, with all our boastfulness, we still felt some shame before Europe for our barbarous and shameful rule. But since the most distinguished men and corporations of the most enlightened republic have begun prostrating themselves before us, the knout despotism has received the consecration of Europe and has thrown all shame to the winds."

"But the French have lent you eight milliards for it, on the strength of their alliance with you," I replied.

"A part of which has gone into heaven knows whose pockets ; the other supports our police against us, and the remainder was sunk in a worthless railway ; while we, in order to provide the interest, must take the horse from our peasant's plough, and the cow from its stable, until even that has come to an end, for nothing else will be left for the executor."

"A Jesuit trick," I said. "You owe the alliance to the diplomacy of Rampolla."

"The sword and the holy-water sprinkler," answered the Russian, as his hand described a circle from the war trophies to the "ikonostas,"

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"they go everywhere hand-in-hand and enslave and plunder the nations."

The leaden, snowy skies looked down on us oppressively, as with a deep shudder at the prison gratings of the Peter-and-Paul fortress we hastened back to the city. I heard in my mind the notes of the "Marseillaise," and before my eyes there stood the gifts of honour from the French nation which had been brought to the despot of the fortress. They are very near each other, cathedral and prison. In the stillness of the night the guardian of the French offerings may often hear the groans and despairing cries of the poor souls who had dreamed of freedom and brotherhood and had paid for their dreams behind the heavy iron bars, deep under the mirror-like surface of the Neva, in the dungeons of the Peter-and-Paul fortress.

CHAPTER VI

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY AS THE PUBLIC SEES IT

Nicholas II.—A character sketch—Intimidation by officials
—Impostors at court—The Empress-Dowager and the
Czaritsa—The grand dukes—Is Alexander II. alive?

"IN no constitutional State is the practical influence of the head of the Government so slight as in the autocracy of Russia," was one of the sayings I heard most often in St. Petersburg, when I endeavoured to get information with regard to the personality and the acts of the reigning Czar. There are, to be sure, individual opinions to the contrary. According to these it depends entirely upon the personali · of the autocrat whether he exerts a strong influence or not. The Conservatives incline to the latter view. Prince Esper Ukhomski held it ; so did a former high functionary in the Department of Finance, as well as a Conservative aristocrat in another department, all of whom I questioned on this point. One of them said in so many words that the Czar needs only to lift a finger to banish all the evil spirits which now rule the land. The aristocrat

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believed the country might be delivered by an emperor better trained for his functions. Prince Ukhtomski ascribes to the leading statesmen, at least, influence enough to do good and to prevent evil, and, therefore, also to do the contrary, as has been done for twenty years, especially under the régime of Plehve. The Liberals and Radicals, however, who form the greater part of the so-called "Intelligence," leave the personality of the ruler entirely out of the question, perhaps from a premature comparison with their constitutional model. They declare a change of conditions without a change of system to be impossible. To be sure, they say, if a suspicious, inhumane, reactionary Czar like Alexander III. is on the throne, the domination of the camorra of officials is made more oppressive. Yet the present mild and benevolent autocrat cannot prevent the existence of conditions which are more insupportable than ever. Only the press and a Parliament could amend matters, not the good intentions of a single man.

I do not undertake to judge which of the two parties is right. In any case it seems worth while to sketch the Czar's personality, which is certainly an element in the fate of Russia and of Europe. The portrait is drawn from the reports of people who have had sufficient opportunity to form a conception of him from their personal observation. It is, of course, impossible for me to name my authorities, or to indicate them in any but the most distant way. It must suffice to say that among them were

people who have known, from intimate association, not only the present rulers, but also their parents and grandparents. I myself have seen the Czar only once. The current portraits of him are very good. The only striking and noteworthy thing in the handsome and sympathetic face is the expression of melancholy resignation. One authority alone—whose statements on other matters I have found to be invariably careful and accurate—expressed doubts of the good-nature of the Czar, and accused him of designing and of rather petty malevolence. All others, including Prince Ukhtomski, who had been the companion of the Czar for years, agree in emphasising the extraordinary, almost childlike loveableness and kindness of the Emperor, who is said to be actually fascinating in personal intercourse. This agrees with the fact, which I know from one unquestionably trustworthy source, that the Czar is intentionally deaf to everything in the reports of his counsellors likely to disparage or cast suspicion upon a colleague, while he immediately listens and asks details when he hears from one of his ministers a favourable word about the action of another. It is an absolute necessity for him to do good, and it is a constant source of pain to him that he cannot prevent the great amount of existing evil. Again, while the single authority says he has found in the Czar indications of a subtle, if not powerful, intellect, the others, while they praise his goodness of heart, do not conceal the weakness of his judgment, which, according to them,

has certainly something pathological about it. Prince Ukhtomski alone speaks of the Emperor with invariable respect and sympathy, without limiting each hearty statement with an immediate "but." All others, without exception, explain the Pretorian rule of Plehve by the mental and moral helplessness of the Emperor, who is entirely uninformed, and is treated by those about him in the most abominable way—under cover of all outward signs of devotion. The things that people dare do to him, presuming upon this helplessness, border upon the inconceivable. That threatening letters can constantly be smuggled into the Czar's pockets, and even into his bed, without his finally hitting upon the idea of seizing his body-servant by the cravat is very strong proof of his mental inactivity; the more so, let me add, because he hears himself ridiculed outside his own door. This police yarn is told, however, of Alexander III., who was a dreaded despot. The rôle, too, which Plehve played, although the Czar did not esteem him in the least, shows how successfully the latter has been intimidated and persuaded into the entirely mistaken belief that Plehve alone could avert the threatening revolution.

At the same time the Czar is said to be anything but confiding in regard to his nearest counsellors. When a report is made to him he sits in the shadow; the man who makes the report sits in the light. He tries to decipher the man's expression and to control him, a thing which is, of course, impossible,

since a good Russian physiognomy is more impenetrable than a Russian ironclad. His lack of knowledge of affairs is as marked as his lack of judgment. I will give an instance of this. In the provinces a quarrel had broken out between the self-governing corporation, the "zemstvos," and the governors. This difference between self-government and autocracy was presented to the Czar as turning merely on the question of centralisation or decentralisation, and as if it were a matter of disagreement between the governors and the Minister of the Interior, the governors striving after the same full authority that is held by the Minister of the Czar. In this way the Czar was successfully deceived in regard to the nature of the quarrel; he did not learn at all that the provinces were making a demonstration against autocracy. The result of the deception was, of course, that the Czar declared himself for the Ministry of the Interior—that is, for Plehve, the increase of whose power he by no means wished.

The rôle which certain adventurers like the hypnotist Philippe and the speculator Bezobrazov are able to play at court is also certainly a notable symptom. The former was to suggest to the Czaritsa the birth of a boy, while in other ways he carried through whatever he liked, since he used the spirit of Alexander III. to secure a hearing for his suggestions. His departure from court followed upon his impudently having got the spirits to recommend a specific firm of contractors for the building of a

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bridge. Bezobrazov, one of the agents who have the Asiatic war on their consciences, is now living somewhere abroad, and does not dare to return, at least while the war lasts.

Still more significant, it seems to me, is the authenticated statement that the Emperor has many times received publications upon the condition of his empire, has carefully read them, and has praised them without taking the slightest step towards carrying out the reforms recommended to him; but that the lapse of a few days, he has ceased even to listen in conversation to the suggestions. This would seem to indicate an almost abnormal weakness of will, which makes it easy for a gifted, inconsiderate, and self-confident reactionary like the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhaïlovitch to carry out his own ideas in everything.

According to these statements, which come directly in every case from original sources, the Czar is to be regarded as a man, upon the whole good-natured and loveable, who is, perhaps, too modest and too conscious of his insufficient knowledge to have the full courage of responsibility, without which an autocrat is the least able of leaders to endure his great burden. Inconsiderate and crafty people, who profit by his weakness, govern him, and he may even be glad of this. In his perplexity and helplessness, which is due to his humane sympathy and modesty, he is obliged to submit to others with whom he can at least leave the responsibility of affairs, which in general, as in the specific

case of the war in Eastern Asia, go contrary to his wishes.

His timid temperament is shown especially in his relations with his mother the Dowager-Empress, who even now, supported by the reactionary members of the family, plays the part of the actual Empress, and cruelly mortifies the young consort of the Czar. It is an open secret that the relations between the two women are anything but untroubled, a condition which reacts upon the relations of the Imperial pair themselves. The Dowager-Empress has renounced none of her prerogatives in favour of her daughter-in-law, who consequently feels herself in a very false position, and complains bitterly of it. People assured me, moreover, that according to Russian ideas none of the rights claimed by the young Czaritsa belong to her so long as the Empress-Mother lives. Hence people find fault with the Czaritsa because she cannot curb her so-called ambition. The Empress-Mother, however, is not at all popular, at least in Liberal circles, where she is held responsible for the fact that her son cannot free himself from the evil traditions of his father, who was a strictly upright, but relentless and brutal despot. The young Czaritsa was formerly blamed among the common people because she had borne no prince in spite of the prayers of the Archbishop John; she is blamed at court also because she does not conceal her English sympathies.

One old friend of the Imperial family, however,

assured me that there is no more charming, upright, and affectionate woman living than this young Hessian princess. She is, he said, completely intimidated by the enemies who surround her and shows them a lowering face. Where she feels herself safe, however, her merry South-German nature comes to the top, and she can even now romp like a little child. It speaks of the innocence of her nature that she is prouder of nothing than of her potato salad. For the rest, the same authority asserts, she has a mind of her own, and may be not always the most comfortable companion for a husband.

Among the other members of the family the Grand Duke Constantine is called the poet. His interest in art and science is said to be sincere. He has also great personal attractiveness. In sharp contrast with him stands the Grand Duke Sergius, Governor-General of Moscow, and brother-in-law and uncle of the Czar. The things commonly reported of his private life are unsuitable for repetition here, since in general I avoid giving space to scandal in a chronicle of important matters. The things worthy of publicity and important for the weal or woe of population are the opinions and abilities of princes, not their liaisons. It is difficult, however, not to speak of the passions of the Grand Duke Sergius, since they form such a violent contrast to his former bigotry. He is unanimously pronounced an unprincipled man with a black record—a man whose pleasure consists in the

sufferings of others. His influence at court is second only to that of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhaïlovitch.

I found in all Russia no trace of a dynastic sentiment. The loyalty to the House of the Hohenzollerns in Prussia, or to the House of the Hapsburgs in Austria, has no counterpart in Russia. If the personal influence of the occupants of the throne may be estimated, the Czar means to the masses of the people the essence of temporal and spiritual power, to the intelligent class an element of fate. The grand dukes are people who can aid and harm, and who are therefore persons of importance for all Russians. The bond of loyalty between dynasty and people, however, which in the West has assured the safe existence of the royal houses through all revolutionary convulsions, does not exist in Russia. On the contrary, people speak freely in private of the "Soltikoff dynasty," in unmistakable allusion to the well-known first lover of the Empress Catherine II. Thus the many murders in the Imperial house are received by the people without great excitement. Only the inhabitants of the Baltic provinces are faithful to the dynasty. The spirit of feudal loyalty runs in their German blood. Even there, however, it is being slowly but resolutely destroyed by the ruling anarchists.

In contemporary opinion Alexander II. and Alexander III. still live, while Nicholas I. is practically forgotten. Alexander II. is surrounded with the martyr's halo, and is thought of only as the eman-

cipating Czar who was got out of the way before he could sign the liberty-giving Bill for a Constitution. Public opinion will not be dissuaded from finding the fact remarkable that the Nihilists succeeded for the first time in reaching the Czar at the moment when all the privileges of the reigning oligarchy were threatened. Therefore people will not remember any traits in him except good ones, a thing not altogether consistent with the picture of him left by Kropotkin in his memoirs. Of Alexander III., on the contrary, only evil is heard, which I, however, must doubt for many reasons. For I have been told little incidents of his private life, incidents which I cannot repeat out of consideration for the incognito of my informant, but which show a certain knightliness and uprightness, and a truly princely kindness to the weak. Another man is answerable for the pitilessness of his fatal policy—Pobyedonoszhev, the Torquemada of Russia. It is, however, inevitable that history should preserve only that picture which expresses the sum total of the effect of a personality. Therefore the memory of Alexander III. is certainly overloaded with sins of omission.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEOPLE'S PALACE OF ST. PETERSBURG, "NARODNI DOM"

Potemkinism—A visit to the palace of pleasure—A well-filled theatre—Patriotism made to order—Where were the people?

IN Potemkin's fatherland the art of government consists principally in hiding the truth not only from the people, but also from the Czar, who must be made to believe that he really strives for the welfare of the people, and not only for that of the all-powerful bureaucracy. Potemkin's art, as is well-known, consisted in deceitfully showing to his beloved Empress, in a long journey, prosperous peasant farms, where in reality wretchedness and misery had established their permanent home. What the all-powerful favourite had accomplished by means of pasteboard and bushes, his successors, the modern Potemkins, must achieve by greater outlay, but like their predecessor, they are in a position to supply it from the richly filled Imperial treasury. The "Narodni Dom," the People's Institute on the St. Petersburg fortress, serves to persuade

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“he philanthropic Nicholas that in his paternally governed empire more ample provision is made for the common people and their welfare than in the heartless, civilised Western countries.

To the eye of a well-meaning ruler or of a well-disposed globe-trotter this is really a pleasant sight. Framed in alleys of tall trees, there rises in the park a far-stretching stone structure, of St. Petersburg dimensions, surmounted by a great cupola. On the payment of ten kopecks at the entrance we walk into the well-heated central portion under the dome, brightly illuminated by arc-lamps. Furs and goloshes are removed. And now an exclamation of admiration escapes our lips. A well-dressed crowd strolls naturally, without crowding and elbowing, towards a platform rising at the farther end, on which, to judge at a distance, Neapolitan folk-singers are performing. We join the procession, and when scarcely in the middle of the immense hall supported by iron girders, there resound behind us thundering notes that make us look upward. An orchestra stationed on a one-story-high cross-gallery has begun a Russian popular song. The singers before us stop for a while. The crowd moves forward. A negro dandy with high, white standing collar and patent-leather boots, proudly leads by the arm a voluptuous blonde of the Orphean order. He grimly shows his teeth and fists to the scoffers who make fun of the unequal pair ; but this does not end in a racial conflict, for it is not yet certain whether a negro

boy is more in sympathy with the Japanese or the Russians. We finally reach the cross-side of the hall, and there opens before us a still more enchanting picture. Behind long buffet-tables, kept scrupulously clean, and laden with all the delicacies of Russian cookery, from caviare sandwiches to the splendid mayonnaise of salmon, there bustle neat waitresses in white caps and broad, white aprons. All the prices are at a low rate. The same is true of the warm dishes, the preparation of which we could watch in the large, open kitchen. Spirituous liquors are not sold, but in their place kvass, and tea from the immense copper samovar shining in the kitchen. The glasses are continually washed by sparkling water on an automatically turning high stand. The bright nickel, the reddish shimmer of the copper, the bluish white tiles of the floor and walls, the snow-white garments of the cooks, the white light of the arc-lamps would inspire a Dutchman to produce a very effective painting of neatness. We are again pressed forward, and after a walk round, which well repaid us, pass the folk-singers, where a part of the crowd is gathered, and return towards the central hall, which we now observe at our leisure. We are struck here, in the first place, by the colossal portraits of the Emperor and Empress. They are the hosts here; for the millions which the imposing structure cost to build came from the Emperor's private purse. Then there is an immense map of the Russian Empire for stimulating patriotic sentiment. But still further

pleasures await us. The entire left wing of the building is occupied by an enormous popular theatre. To-night Tschaikovski's "Maid of Orleans" is being played. We purchase tickets at the popular price of one rouble per seat, whereby we secure a place at about the middle of the extensive parterre, and are enabled to look over the public in front and at the back of us ; and this is no less interesting than the play on the stage. The seats in the rows ahead of us cost up to two roubles ; in the rows at the back of us up to sixty kopecks. On either side are galleries and standing room that cost only from thirty to seventy kopecks ! In comparison with the prices in the other St. Petersburg theatres those of the "Narodni Dom" must be considered decidedly popular, even though it is a peculiar class of people that can spare thirty kopecks to two roubles for an evening at the theatre, quite aside from the incidental expenses of an evening drive, of admission, and of wardrobe. But of that anon.

We follow the play. The performance is decidedly respectable, from the leader to the chorus. The setting is quite brilliant, and true to style, the orchestra well trained, with some very excellent performers among the soloists. We forget, for the time being, that we are in Russia, notwithstanding the Russian language and the Russian music. It is Schiller's heroic composition which has inspired the composer. Dunoi's Lahire, Lionel, Raymond, Bertram, Agnes Sorel, Charles, the Cardinal appear before us in familiar scenes, and we experience at

times quite peculiar sensations when here in this northern night we again come across the images, the glowing rhetoric in the dear tongue of our own poet which gave us the first intoxication of patriotic enthusiasm. The passionately warm music of Tschaikovski, and the swing of his choruses intensify the effect of those reminiscences.

But let us return to Russian reality. A thin, black-bearded young man paces busily through the rows during one of the entr'actes. He exchanges remarks here and there with the officers and officials, whom he leaves with a smile. And in the second entr'acte it becomes evident what preparations had been made here. War has just been declared; the password has just been given out to arouse patriotic enthusiasm, or, at least, to make the attempt. Already in one or another of the theatres the public had thunderingly called for the national anthem. What is proper in the Imperial Theatre must be acceptable in the popular theatre. The curtain had fallen after the second act, when suddenly, from one of the box-like recesses on the left gallery, was heard the call "Anthem! Anthem!" Everybody looked curiously up. There were a few young men in uniform, as we found later, student-members of that patriotic secret association organised under the patronage of the reactionaries—a stroke of Suvorin—to watch the progressive students. The orchestra replied to the call with remarkable alacrity, and the public rose dutifully smiling and stood to the beautiful hymn.

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But fresh shouts were heard. The choir must join in. The curtain rose obediently, and the entire cast of "The Maid of Orleans," Charles, Agnes, Jean d'Arc, Lionel, and the rest, with the people and knights, were already properly grouped and joined in the hymn with the orchestra accompaniment. The public again arose politely and listened standing. The demonstration was not yet at an end. It was reported that the hymn was sung three times in the other theatres, and therefore that should occur also here. And the public patiently rises for the third time, and lets the song float over it. The thin, black-bearded young man, however, rubs his hands with which he but shortly before had joined in the applause, throws a significant glance at his neighbours, and hastens out. I do not know to this day whether he was an official of the establishment, or a penny-a-liner who had arranged an interesting piece of local news.

In this way I came to see the birth of one of those patriotic demonstrations of which the papers were full in the following days. The impression was anything but striking. The fine hand of the police could be detected in the arrangement as well as in the audience. It was a forced demonstration. I remember from my boyhood the explosive enthusiasm after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and the evening after the battle of Sedan. At man's estate I was a non-participating observer of patriotic demonstrations in Hungary; my heart beat fast at home as well as in Hungary under the

stress of sympathy. That was a real storm of feeling. Here it was merely wet straw that would not burn. Nay worse. An obedient participation—woe to him who did not participate!—but thereafter a sarcastic wink felt as a compensation for the coercion just experienced.

The difference was never clearer to me between free citizens and Russian subjects, between national sentiment and obedience, than at these patriotic demonstrations under police supervision and inspiration.

And now I looked at the public more carefully. Where was the "people" among the thousands sitting in the theatre, or eddying up and down the colossal halls? Not a hundred, not fifty men or women in the dress of the common people. All of it was what is known in St. Petersburg as the "gray public," officials, business-men, the class with an income of two or three thousand roubles. I saw high-school instructors, students with their lady-loves, modistes, the good, small bourgeois, that often stand morally and mentally high above the fashionable world; but the people, in our sense of the term, the workingman, the peasant, for whom the popular house was really built, in whose name the Czar was made to contribute, and to whom the building is dedicated, these were absent, and had to be absent, because they do not possess the schooling that would at all enable them to enjoy what the "Narodni Dom" has to offer. The court may be persuaded that with such an institution they are marching in

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the vanguard of civilisation, and that something of the future State has been realised with an institution that even the republics of the West do not possess, but the Russian patriots who are indeed living for their nation, and who would free it from the fetters of ignorance and superstition, only shake their heads sadly at this Potemkinism. Sand for the eyes of the philanthropic Czar, another winter resort for the St. Petersburg middle class ; for the people neither "panem" nor "circenses ;" but for the paid eulogists a theme at which enthusiasm may be kindled—that is the "Narodni Dom," the pride of St. Petersburg. In Zurich, in Frankfort, in any place with real popular education, this "Narodni Dom" would be an ideal people's house, adapted to inspire the sentiment of citizenship and patriotism, and to elevate the general level of culture. In St. Petersburg it only shows the good intentions of the Czar and his consort, and the fundamental corruption of the régime. A sober, enlightened, culture-loving people would not submit to the autocracy of bureaucratic dictation shown above. It makes ideal "people's houses," but takes care that, as far as possible, this house be kept free from the people.

CHAPTER VIII

A TALK WITH A RUSSIAN PRINCE

An appeal to Europe—The impossibility of revolution—Massacres arranged by the police—Threatening letters in the Czar's bed—The power of the camorra—A dark outlook.

BEFORE I report here a significant conversation I had with a prince, the friend and former confidant of the Czar, I would make an earnest appeal to the public opinion of Europe, for which these lines are intended. I have conversed with many men of the highest rank in Russia; I am indebted to them for most valuable information about the land of riddles, yet not a single interview was concluded without my informant asking me to withhold his name. Only the prince, whose views I report here, said to me, "If you need my name to prove the credibility of the most incredible things I had to tell you, you may use it without compunction. Possible suffering that may befall me because of this use of my name is of no consideration where the enlightenment of Europe is concerned." On

mature deliberation I have preferred, however, not to mention his name here. I thus renounce the weight of a name of European repute and of unparalleled authority. Notwithstanding this, I still consider it necessary to ask public opinion of Europe to watch with redoubled care the fate of the few persons who have been my informants. It would not be right for me to suppress this report, for I should thus act in direct opposition to the wishes of the noble-minded prince. Neither could I disguise him entirely, since there are, after all, but few persons that could have made to me these disclosures on the helplessness of even the eminent patriots. And so I must resort to an appeal to the public opinion of Europe with proper caution. It can protect the prince. For with all their wickedness the Russian rulers still fear foreign public opinion. This and this alone has a certain influence on the Czar. Let it be exerted on behalf of a man of the greatest heroism, who makes appeal to it out of pure patriotism.

"Does your highness think," I asked, in the interview I am about to report here, "that the discontent everywhere noticeable in all classes of society is real and of political significance?"

"We must make distinctions," answered the prince; "of its reality there is no doubt. But if you ask whether I consider it politically fruitful, in the same sense that we may gain through this discontent some necessary change in the present régime, I must answer, unfortunately, no."

"Is this, then, only the chronic discontent present

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in Western Europe as well as in Russia, or is it now acute?"

"It is acute. As you have justly observed, the West has its discontented element also; yet your Western discontent with all work of man may best be compared with that frame of mind prevalent in our country, even under a régime that is normal and well-intentioned, lacking only efficiency. The restlessness that you, as a stranger, have noted here is quite abnormal, and is due to the decided wickedness, not to say infamy, of the existing system."

"Then it is stronger than usual?"

"Incomparably stronger. No entertainment, however harmless, no scientific congress, no meeting of any corporation can take place that will not end in a political demonstration. All the prisons are filled with most worthy people, deportations and banishments increase, yet other men and women press onward to martyrdom."

"I admire this spirit of sacrifice in your intelligent classes."

"That is the difference between to-day and a few years ago. Ten years ago our public opinion was weakened, resigned, crushed by the heavy hand of Alexander III. and the serpent wiles of Pobyedonostsev. With the accession to the throne of the present Czar new hopes were awakened; but now, thanks to the executioners Sipyagin and Plehve, disappointment and exasperation have grown to such a vast extent that expression of them can no longer be repressed, and thousands risk life and

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liberty unable longer to bear this condition of grinding inward revolt."

"I witnessed the funeral of Mikhailovski. I must say that my ear detected revolutionary tones, and such a procession of five or six thousand men and women from among the highest classes, surrounded by Cossacks, among a listening police, singing songs, making fiery, freedom-breathing speeches, impressed me of all things as a foreboding of revolution."

"Arrests in plenty were made among the participants in the funeral celebration. But do not deceive yourself. There is no revolution with us. Our country is too thinly populated. Let us say that ten, fifty, or one hundred thousand inspired intellectuals would willingly sacrifice themselves if they could help us thereby; how many Cossacks and gendarmes would there be for each revolutionist, when we are spending millions to maintain an army against the nation? There is only one revolution that can be really dangerous, and I will not assert that such a revolution could not break out if the present war should end disastrously. That would be a peasant revolution directed, not against the régime itself, but against all property-owning and educated persons; it would begin by all of us being killed and thrown into the river. And the odds would be a hundred to one then that the police would not be actively against this revolution, but secretly would be for it, in order to rid themselves quickly and surely of their real antagonist, the educated classes. A Kishineff may be arranged here at any

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day, not only against the Jews, but against every one with whom the police wish to get even."

"Then your highness believes that the Kishineff massacres were arranged by the police?"

"This is not a mere belief; it is a proved fact. Its real authors, Krushev and Pronin, are the special protégés of Plehve, and Baron Lowendahl received a direct order from the higher authorities to refrain from any intervention."

"And what was the purpose of it?"

"To intimidate the Jews, who, by their temperament, bring a little more life to the Radical parties, and to create the impression in the higher circles that there is discontent in the country, not against the Government, but against the usurious Jews."

"And is not that true?"

"Usury with us is carried on by good Orthodox Christians much more successfully than by the Jews, who are comparatively few in number, and, besides, do not enjoy the protection of the authorities. No; the mob massacres the Jews because in the name of the Czar they are proclaimed outlaws. It is a kind of annual picnic. The Kishineff massacre is condemned by the whole country, not only by the philo-Semites, to whom, by the way, I do not belong. It has showed to all of us what may be done in our land when an assumed purpose requires it. And for this reason the entire public opinion takes sides with the Jews, who were merely intended to serve as scapegoats for the educated and the discontented."

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"But in what respect is the present régime so essentially different from the preceding ones that such a fermentation could arise? Surely the people have not been spoiled by anything better?"

"Now it is worse than ever before. There is perhaps an explanation for this. Czar Nicholas is inspired by the best of motives. He is the first of the malcontents. He would give his heart's blood to help his people. The clique knows that, and is, therefore, risking everything or one card to prevent the Czar from drawing nearer to the people or creating institutions that would put an end to bureaucratic omnipotence. The terrors of revolution are painted on the wall, and the daily arrests are intended to prove that it is only the mailed fist of the present Government that can curb a popular uprising."

"I know from sources near the Czar's family, that the Czar is again finding threatening letters in his coat-pockets, under his pillow, and elsewhere."

"This is an old police trick. It was used to frighten Alexander III., and it almost drove him insane. Naturally, it is only the police that can carry out such devices, for others could not reach the Czar's room. But Plehve retains his ascendancy through the illusion that his dismissal would mean the way to the scaffold for the Czar's family."

"Has the Czar really anything to fear should the police relax its vigilance?"

"Heaven forbid! The Czar is a sort of deity to the people, and the educated classes know only too

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well that no man is less responsible for existing conditions than he, in whose name these conditions are inflicted upon us. But the Czar is made to believe that every attempt to free public opinion from its fetters would lead to popular representation, to a constitution, and finally to the scaffold."

"And all that is done by Plehve ?"

"By him alone. His predecessor, Sipyagin, was an honest, narrow reactionary, who regarded the State as the private property of the dynasty, something like a great estate with property in souls as well as in inanimate things. The nation has no more right to complain against the impositions of the master than the cattle on the estate to complain about the methods of feeding. Plehve is of an entirely different calibre. A political cheat, an intriguer, an unscrupulous cynic, the playing on the key-board of power tickles his blunted nerves. He has as much conscience, sympathy, and humanity as my tiger here. His talent consists of cunning and the art of dealing with men. There is no one with whom he has exchanged three words that he has not lied to. His patriotic over-zeal, however, as a non-Russian—he naturally overdoes his patriotism — commands him to the 'camarilla,' and so he becomes omnipotent."

"You say that Plehve is not Russian ?"

"He is partly Lettish, partly Polish, partly Jewish. Men like this are always the worst here ; they must see that their non-Russian names are forgotten."

"And what do you mean by 'camarilla'?"

"The servile courtiers, the high officials, but, above all, the entire system. Do not forget that we are being ruled by a camorra of bureaucrats, that have no interest at all in the real welfare of the country, but have their primary interest in the uncurtailed maintenance of their power. If the Czar wished to hear, to-day, the truth about the condition and sentiments of the country he would never succeed, because they do not expose one another in the camorra; for there is only one god, the career with all its chances of legitimate and illegitimate gain."

"Your highness, I must allow myself an indiscreet question. It is said that you are a friend of the Czar. You are surely not the only one. You must have colleagues among the nobility, statesmen, and patriots who cannot be prevented from being heard by the Emperor. Are you not in a position to break through the iron ring of the bureaucrats, and to tell the Czar the truth about the men who possess his confidence?"

"I appreciate your question. But what could single individuals do against the abuses of centuries? Something is being done in the direction indicated by you. The Czar receives, often enough, honest and unreserved statements. But a lasting effect from such occasional impulses is out of the question. Moreover, one must know the spirit of the antechamber, the slanders and suspicions, the burden of routine. It would require the power of

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a Hercules to escape from the net of these forces, and the Czar is of a timid, modest, kindly nature. And how quickly is every suggestion or initiative paralysed ? And what influences cross one another at such a court ! Who is strong enough to oppose a grand vizier who works with unscrupulous falsification, and weaves about the sovereign an impenetrable fabric of false dangers by means of documentary calumnies and misstatements ?"

"And so your highness can see no deliverance ?"

"Only when God in heaven shall decree it, not otherwise. We live between the anarchists in office and the anarchists with dagger and revolver. These are only active forces, the latter as the logical sequence of the former, and more than once their tools as well. All else is inactive, limited to dissipating demonstration. The fountain of public opinion is not tolerated ; the organisation of a progressive party is prevented ; the system anxiously guards the people from any contact with the educated classes. There is no room for sentimentality in repelling every attempt to render the camorra harmless. An unguarded word, a simple denunciation, are sufficient to send honourable and respected men where they lose all desire for criticism. Whence, then, can help come ? And we need it, for the war places before us entirely new problems that may be solved only by unshackling intelligence. But now our bankruptcy will become evident to all the world."

"And Witte ! Has he no longer any influence ?"

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"None whatever. He is not a convenient and acceptable minister, for he has a statesman's ambition and political ideas. He could, perhaps, inaugurate a new system, but this is not allowed. In this country there rules only the Ministry of the Interior—that is, the secret police ; the other departments are merely figure-heads."

"And a constitution would change nothing of this ?"

"The Liberals and Radicals believe so, but I do not. I am of a different opinion. 'Men and not measures' is my motto, especially in an autocracy. You know my views on the war. I am convinced that our brave army will win. That will only mean a greater strengthening of the system, till the complete financial and economic, social and moral collapse, or till the first collision with a real Power like the United States of America. I see no relief and no salvation, especially since foreign public opinion also forsakes us. We are fawned upon for political or commercial reasons. Tell them abroad that we deserve something better than this contemptible, statesmanlike reserve and these affected expressions of respect before a régime that we ourselves denounce without exception. We deserve honest sympathy, for no other nation has yet been made to struggle for its civilisation against so pitiless an adversary. Europe must further distinguish between the Russian nation and this adversary. Russian society is full of noble impulses ; it is generous, warm-hearted, capable of inspiration,

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and free from odious prejudices. Our common oppressor, the danger to the world's peace as well as the author of this unhappy war, I repeat it again, is the camorra of the officials, a thoroughly anarchistic class. I do not know, I must admit, when and how our release will come. I fear that we shall, ere that, pass through sad trials, and even more terrible misery of our flayed and hunger-enfeebled people, before heaven shall take pity on us."

I left the noble-minded prince with feelings that are usually awakened in us only by tragedy.

CHAPTER IX

THE FALL OF SÄNGER

A Minister of Public Instruction — The omnipotence of Plehve — The position of Jewish students — A Russian Metternich — Public opinion without a press.

THE sudden dismissal of the Minister of Public Instruction, the former University Professor Sänger, led me to discuss the matter more exhaustively with several high dignitaries who willingly gave me information during my sojourn in St. Petersburg. I had the opportunity of conversing with persons exceptionally well informed, but, for reasons easily conceivable, I am not permitted to mention their names. I report here, from my notes, an interview with a person who stood near the retired minister, and is, still, in active Government service, because it seems interesting to me even now.

"In the first place," said my informant, "you must not believe that Sänger was dismissed. He himself insisted that his resignation, repeatedly offered, be finally accepted. Scarcely two days ago

the Czar asked a general, highly esteemed by him, who came here from Warsaw, where Sänger had formerly acted as Curator of the University, as to his opinion of Sänger, and the general answered that he considered Sänger a very honest and learned man. 'I have just that opinion of him myself,' said the Czar, complainingly, 'but he positively would not remain in office!'

"Why does your Excellency believe that Sänger had become so tired of his position?"

"There are permanent and special reasons. The permanent ones are harder to explain than the special ones. I therefore begin with the more difficult. A Minister of Public Instruction—*lucus a non lucendo*—has here a very difficult post when he is an honest man and really desires to live up to his duties. For what he is really asked to do is, *not* to enlighten the people, to do *nothing* for education, and merely to pretend activity. We need no education; we need obedience. That, of course, is not said to the Czar, who really believes that he is being served honestly. But in the end it amounts to this, that only one man rules here, the Minister of the Interior and Chief of the Secret Police, and that all the other ministers must dance to his music. I make exception here, to a certain extent, of the Ministers of War and of Finance. But if in any case there be a possibility of conflict between any other department and the omnipotent Police Ministry, that other department must subordinate itself to the rule of the latter. For

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Von Plehve stands guard over the security of the empire. You understand that all other considerations are silenced here. The third division (the secret police) and the Holy Synod are the pillars of our empire. Of what importance here is an inoffensive Minister of Instruction, or Culture, as he is called in your country?"

"I should be obliged to your Excellency for concrete examples."

"Here they are. There was, for instance, General Wannowski, a really competent and influential man. While he was at the head of the Department of Instruction he could not be so easily given the cold shoulder at the court as a mere university professor. Wannowski even effected some reforms in our universities, but finally he, too, found it desirable to retire from the field. Do you think it possible for a minister to remain in office when a regulation prepared by him, approved by the Czar, and made public, must next day be withdrawn because the Minister of the Interior states in a special report that this regulation is in opposition to the general Government policy and is a danger to the security of the country?"

"And has that occurred?"

"Something of that kind was a secondary cause also of Sänger's resignation. As former Curator of the University of Warsaw, he knew Poland well. With the Czar's approval he framed a regulation for instruction in Poland that was pedagogically wise and politically conciliating. Plehve instantly

made objection—for a relief of the tension everywhere prevailing does not suit his system—and secured the withdrawal of the regulation."

"But could not Sänger defend his measures?"

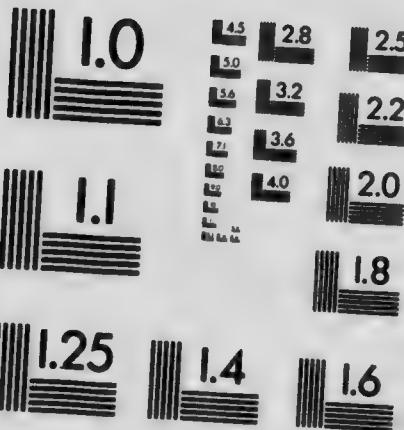
"His position was already weakened. Above all, his enemies succeeded in placing him under suspicion as guilty of philo-Semitism. You know, or perhaps do not know, that it is also a part of the system here to keep the Jews—above all people—from higher education; and this higher education in itself runs contrary to the desire of the Dictator-General of the Holy Synod and to that of the police. A Minister of Public Instruction, particularly when he hails from the learned professions, may easily commit the error of making science readily accessible to all properly qualified. Sänger granted some alleviation to the Jews, so that the most gifted among them, especially when their Academy professor had already taken a warm interest in them, could enter the university without great difficulty. He was reproached with that, and that would have been sufficient to weaken the position of a stronger man."

"I am not familiar with the disabilities of Jewish students."

"A detailed description of these disabilities would carry you too far afield. Suffice it to state, that we possess a very complicated system, particularly developed in Moscow, for the exclusion of Jewish children from the schools. The ratio of three to one hundred must, however, be conveniently



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tolerated. Now it happens quite frequently that, no matter how strict the headmaster has been in admission, on promotion from the lower to the higher class this relation is altered in favour of the Jews, because of their diligence and sobriety in contrast to the characteristics of the sons of the Russian officials. Then the trouble begins anew. Splendidly qualified candidates cannot enter the university since the prescribed percentage has already been reached. The professors, however, who are not pronounced anti-Semites, like these Jewish students who have survived this process of selection, for they are really studious. But that again is opposed to the principles of the accepted policy. And whoever is inclined to take sides with the professors rather than with the bulwarks of this general policy may easily find himself in the toils, as it happened, for instance, in Sänger's case."

"Who are these bulwarks of this general policy?"

An involuntary glance towards the door, as if to see whether some uninvited listener was not accidentally near—a common kind of glance such as I have seen only in Russia—was the first answer. Then, even in lower tones than before, he proceeded :

"This is still a portion of the legacy of Alexander III., rigidly guarded by the Dowager-Empress, and particularly by the Grand Duke Sergius in Moscow. When in the Russo-Turkish War enormous peculations of the military stores were discovered, the heir to the throne, then commander of a corps in the

reserve, was persuaded that the Jewish contractors had defrauded the army, and the officer of the secret police, Zhikharen, exerted himself to prove that two-thirds of all the revolutionaries were Jews. That belief remained, just as a great portion of the French still cling to the belief that Dreyfus is a traitor because he is used as a scapegoat for the information-mongers of high rank on the general staff. Something similar happened here. I really have no desire to defend any Jewish contractor. But when there was in our stores lime-dust instead of flour in the sacks, quite other people than the Jews pocketed the difference. However, that is another story. Grand Duke Sergius, of Moscow, has among his other passions bigotry and a fanatical hatred of the Jews. And he is the uncle and brother-in-law of the Czar."

"Then Sänger found himself in a rather dubious position mainly as a philo-Semite?"

"At least as a man of not sufficiently pronounced anti-Semitism. But also because he was not really the man to hold his own with the generals and that expert in career-making, Von Plehve. Finally, he was blamed for adverse criticism of the general principles of the Government expressed at various conventions."

"At what conventions?"

"There was lately a convention of board-school teachers that presumed to criticise by speaking the truth about an intimate of Plehve's, Pronin, of Kishineff. I must emphasise here, by the way, that

there was only an insignificant minority of Jews at that convention. Then there was a medical congress whose hygienic resolutions hid under a very thin hygienic disguise an arraignment of the system of stupefying the populace. God knows Sänger had surely no premonition of these occurrences. But they concerned his department ; the spirit of his staff was not right, and he alone was to blame for it, especially since Von Plehve knew very well what Sänger thought of him."

"Always Plehve, and only Plehve!"

"He is our little Metternich. A representative man, to quote Emerson. The régime cannot be discussed without the mention of his name. Here is another little sample of Plehve. There is a Professor Kuzmin-Karavayev at the Academy of Military and International Law. He was elected member of the St. Petersburg City Council and is a member of the Zemstvos of Tver, a highly-respected, upright man, interested in popular education. But now he has been forbidden any public activity by the following letter of Von Plehve. Plehve wrote to Kuropatkin, the Minister of War : 'By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Emperor on January 8, 1904, I would simply dismiss Professor Kuzmin-Karavayev as politically inconvenient. But since he is in the Government service I ask you to insist that the aforesaid professor renounce all public activity.' This is literally true. You see how the omnipotent Plehve treats even a favourite like Kuropatkin, to say nothing of a timid, good professor like our

Sänger ! You may rest assured that, with all his upright views, we lost little in his resignation ; he was without influence and too weak."

"And who will succeed him ?"

"That is quite immaterial. Major-General Shilder, Superintendent of the Cadet Corps, has already been offered the position. But he declined it. As long as Plehve's spirit and that of his minions is sweeping over the waters nothing will happen save what favours the suppression of public enlightenment and the prevention of revolution. The name is but an empty sound."

"Your Excellency, should I commit an indiscretion by publishing our conversation just as it took place ?"

"With the necessary precaution of leaving out my name, for I naturally have no inclination to attract the especial anger of our Dictator-General. For the rest, I do not believe I have told you anything that could not be said in almost the same words by any one at all familiar with conditions as they are."

"That, your Excellency, I must confirm. One of the greatest riddles for me is the formation of a public opinion in St. Petersburg, where the papers dare not even hint at what is spoken in the circles of the intelligent classes."

"Russia also has its constitution," said he, rising, and smiling significantly. "That constitution consists of the dissensions among the ministers. And when among ourselves a certain discretion is

assumed, we do not stand on ceremony. Here you have the sources of public opinion"—again the significant smile—"you will perhaps understand why no minister fares well."

CHAPTER X

A FUNERAL

Mikhailovski?—Importance of periodical literature—Cossacks as police—A representative group of mourners—The yearning for freedom—A picturesque ceremony—An unjust arrest.

“YOU are here at an opportune moment,” said one of my St. Petersburg friends. “Mikhailovski died suddenly, and is going to be buried to-morrow.”

“Mikhailovski?” I was almost ashamed to admit that I was entirely ignorant of the services of this man, and did not understand what interest his funeral could have for me. My friend had pronounced the name as if no tolerably well-educated person in all the wide world could have the least doubt as to its significance. I had to acknowledge again how little we, in the West, know of Russian life. I am not of the people who have read least about Russia, but Mikhailovski’s name was quite unfamiliar to me.

My friend enlightened me. Mikhailovski was the editor of the most widely read Russian monthly,

Ruskoye Bogatstvo (Russian Wealth), a sociologist, and the recognised intellectual leader of Radical young Russia. Nowhere in the world do the weekly and monthly magazines play such a rôle in the intellectual life of a nation as in the great Slav empire. This may be accounted for, on the one hand, by the meagre development of the daily press, existing only under strict censorship, and on the other by the high degree of scientific and practical development. The nation is still in a stage of development in which there is really but one vocation — that of general education. This need of general culture is in accordance with the general modelling of Russian social life. There is very extensive and fruitful social intercourse ; visitors on estates remain for weeks. This requires a periodically renewed supply of topics of conversation. And, finally, the nation is in a state of high political tension. Parliamentary debates wherein this political tension may be discharged are entirely lacking. Thus there remains only the discussions of the home, which, again, are fed only by the reviews. Thus it happens that the weekly and monthly publications serve at once as books, newspapers, and parliaments, and that the greatest writers are enrolled either as contributors or editors in the staffs of the reviews. Mikhailovski, however, was jointly with the writer Korolenko, the editor of the greatest Radical monthly ; a man who was the object of a reverence such as is only accorded in the West to a great orator or party leader.

"Plehve is a lucky dog," continued my friend. "The outbreak of the war has forced the entire Russian opposition camp into an armistice. It would be considered unpatriotic to create internal difficulties for the Government that needs all its power for an external conflict. It is at least intended to see whether there would be any new provocations on Plehve's part before further steps are taken in the organisation of the opposition. At any other time an occasion like Mikhailovski's funeral would lead to great demonstrations and collisions with the Cossacks. Now it will only amount to expressions of devotion; and it is quite probable also that the police will avoid a collision. Hence, you may now take part without danger in a demonstration by the intellectual party of St. Petersburg, where, at any other time, you would at least run the risk of a few blows of the knout, or a temporary arrest at the police station."

"Why do you speak of the knout and the Cossacks?" I asked; "are not the police sufficient to maintain order?"

"They are not sufficient in mass demonstrations, especially when the students take part in them. Formerly, use was made of the "dvorniks" (janitors) and butcher-boys to bring the students to reason. But that is no longer practicable. The "dvorniks" and butcher-boys have hesitated of late to come out against the students. They have discovered that these persons really take their life in their hands for the people's sake, and therefore are no longer willing

to do the gaoler's work. And so the Cossacks must step in ; and they know no pity."

We therefore agreed to meet in front of the deceased publicist's house. Such a Russian funeral is a full day's work. It begins early in the forenoon, and it is dark when you return home. In front of Mihailovski's house I saw Korolenko—a still robust man, with very curly grey hair and beard—and almost all the master-minds of the intellectual life of St. Petersburg. Even the recently retired minister, Sänger, showed himself. Many a man was named to me with great reverence. The foreign public knows none of them, and so I may forego the repetition of their names. It shou'd be mentioned here, however, that in Russia a distinguished man tries to show his distinction by his dress and appearance, as far as possible. Here an original *w. y* of dressing the hair is one of the marks of distinction, and so one sees many striking heads. There is no getting along without some posing. I noticed, too, that scarcely one of the forty or fifty men I had become acquainted with was absent from the funeral. Now, these forty or fifty persons belong to most widely different social and political groups, so that the Radical publicist could not have possibly had the same significance for each of them. But every one was present and was noticed. In fact, every new appearance was noted by the crowd. Most of them knew one another. The loose but yet effective organisation of opposition in Russia had never been so clear to me as now. The unwritten

public opinion I had frequently noted orders every "intellectual" to take part in this mute demonstration against the régime ; and these orders are more readily submitted to than the legitimate orders. I do not believe our newspapers in the West could even approximately establish this intimate contact which holds day by day among these thousands in a manner mysterious to me. It is as if St. Petersburg were fermented by some medium in which every impulse is propagated with furious speed. And people have an incredible amount of time for politics in St. Petersburg. People in Russia have in general more time than we hurrying Westerners can conceive.

The coffin was carried from the house—where a religious service had already taken place—to the church across the street, and there a new service was begun. The church was so quickly filled, that hundreds had to remain outside. But I was advised by my companion to go to the cemetery ; for it is only there that the funeral proper takes place, and it is of importance to secure a good place. We first attended to various matters in the house, and after more than a half-hour's ride in the carriage, reached the cemetery where are laid the remains of the city's celebrities. Names are again mentioned to me with respect and reverence. What an unsubstantial thing is fame, after all ! The few sounds that one man with awe, leave another utterly unmoved. One circle names mean nothing that imply a relation in another.

We stamp through the snow along the narrow paths between the gravestones towards the spot where the deceased is to find his last resting place. A densely packed multitude is already pushing towards the newly-dug grave. Near by a mausoleum with open portico is already entirely occupied by women. We attempt to find a place there. We are met by hostile glances. Then one of the ladies approaches me and says something in Russian, which, of course, I do not understand. I express my regrets in German and French. She now excuses herself, declaring that she had made a mistake. A word from my companion, and the excitement is at once allayed.

"It was nothing," he explained to me. "They did not know whether you were a spy or a foreigner. They know now, and are no longer uneasy. People know one another in this circle. But you are an entirely new person who must first be classified." Evidently my companion played a prominent part in this society that had no rules, for a place was made for me with the greatest readiness; so that I found myself among none but celebrities, whose names were mentioned by the young ladies standing near in respectful whispers. They were mostly writers, scholars, and professors; among them was also the author of a work on Siberia, which I had read with horror years ago. He had already spent twelve years of his life in exile, and now he was again exposing himself to oppression by the authorities. Although the police were still out

of sight, it would have hardly been advisable for a spy to appear here. Among the thousands of men, women, and girls, who were already densely crowded about the grave, there was not a single person who was not acquainted with at least a part of those present. Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd. Some was mentioned and repeated resentfully. Suworin! Who is Suworin? The editor of the *Novoye Vremya*. He was said to have been seen by some one. What impudence! Where is he? He must at once leave the cemetery! But it was only a false alarm. Suworin would not dare to come here; and why? I inquire about the nature of his paper. Is it a *Libre Parole* or *Intransigeant*? Is it Nationalist or Clerical? An old gentleman who hears my question, replies, turning towards me: "No-ism, scoundrelism." I see how the word is winged and is approvingly repeated in a widening circle. Yes, the most widely circulated paper in Russia, which enjoys Government patronage and the best and most authentic news from all the departments, is branded by the flower of Russian intelligence with the word of deepest scorn. Russia is surely a remarkable land: it does not grant a license for baseness even to anti-Semitism.

Hour by hour passes. The snow under our feet had turned to water, and then again to ice, but it is no longer possible to leave one's place. We are ranged shoulder to shoulder, the men scarcely able to make sufficient room to keep the women from being crushed against the trees and gravestones. An

elderly woman, with remarkably delicate features, and wrapped in a thin cloak, is standing quite near me. She has been here since ten o'clock this morning—that is more than four hours. I feel almost ashamed of my fur coat and my felt goloshes when I see that intelligent poor woman standing near me. My neighbour and myself succeed, without her noticing it, in placing her between our coats so that she might feel somewhat warmer. Thousands of women and girls are standing in the same way: old and young, down to the unsophisticated school-girl, pretty and homely, all of them patient and orderly; and what impressed me especially was the absence of the least trace of flirting between the men and women students. All of them were possessed by one sentiment: by political passion and the yearning for freedom. I am not foolish enough to think that in Russia erotic proclivities are eliminated in the intercourse between the youth of the opposite sexes, but nothing of it is noticeable here, and I must assume from this that frivolity and cynicism have no abode in this generation. All those who are standing here run the gauntlet of imprisonment and deportation, and there is no room for frivolous thoughts.

We hear, at last, the indistinct noise that heralds the approach of a great crowd of people. Then the noise becomes more differentiated—it changes into song. It is a body of students following the coffin with songs of mourning over the miles of road. They sing wonderful part-songs do these Russians

in a way that one must envy. They have a perfect ear. After the long period of waiting the final deliverance through its solemn notes affects the heart strangely. And now a new wave of approaching humanity. The impossible becomes possible, the students crowd past us and gather about the grave. The coffin is lifted over heads and into the noose of the dull gravedigger. A moment of silence. Then the priest reads a short prayer and gives a brief funeral sermon on the departed brother in Christ. Then only does the funeral ceremony proper begin. The priest steps aside. A white-haired man, a university professor, whose name passes from mouth to mouth, extols the departed champion of freedom. He is followed by a poet declaiming sonorous verse. Then by a woman. Then by a student. Then by a woman again, in irregular, improvised order. Then my neighbour, the man from Siberia, calls out to the students. Thereupon begins a song full of fervour and passion. A woman speaks again, and after her a young girl. The police—hundreds of them with many officers—are crowded quite into the background. It is better so. For of all the speeches I distinguished but one word, spoken in passionate tones, "Svboda! svboda!" (Liberty! Liberty!) And, as if that word were a signal, it calls forth sighs and weeping and the gnashing of teeth. It is an indescribable drama, a terribly exciting scene. I cannot control myself, and cry out to my neighbour, "Do ask the poor girls to be quiet!" "Make the poor girl

keep still," and I point towards the police, but I am not understood. They have all been seized by a religious fanaticism that makes martyrdom bliss. How truly lovable they are, these educated people who still have an ideal and are strange to the contemptuous and *blasé* attitude that so sadly characterises our Western youth. And how the heart contracts at the thought that all this beautiful enthusiasm must vanish without result; that the longing and inspiration are helplessly shivered against the brutality of the Cossacks and gendarmes!

We left the consecrated ground in a strange intoxication after a tiring struggle with the densely packed crowd that would move neither forward nor backward. "It is not the business of the police to maintain order, but only to keep people under surveillance." I have been astonished to this very day that no one in the crowd was trampled to death.

I heard a few days later that the statistician Annenski, an old man of sixty-five, was arrested for having delivered one of those impassioned speeches at the grave. A number of men of irreproachable character, among them the historian who was the first speaker there, testified that Annenski was not one of the speakers. I could have testified to that myself, for I stood among the speakers, and each one was named to me. But the police would not give up its victim. Annenski was still in confinement when I left Russia. Now he is banished

to Revel for four years, because they had found a few numbers of Struve's periodical in his house.

I, however, carried away with me from Mikhailovski's grave the certainty that the coming generation is lost to the reactionary party. Young Russia, in so far as it possesses an academic education, is Liberal, both the men and the women. And thus that funeral day was for me the most hopeful day that I had lived in Russia.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUSSIAN OFFICIAL

Capitulation of the Czar to officialdom—The cancer of Russian Government—An old story—An object-lesson in police government—The lust of power—The Czar and the camorra.

CZAR Nicholas I. is known to have been a great admirer of Gogol's "Revisor." Yet a more bitter satire on Russian officialdom than this realistic comedy does not exist. Plenty of utterances of the czars who have followed Nicholas are quoted to show that none of the supposedly absolute monarchs of Russia have been in the least in doubt as to the character of their most trustworthy servants. When, nevertheless, fifty years after the death of Nicholas I., the camorra of officials makes more havoc than ever, and obstructs all development of the Russian nation with the close meshes of its organisation, as with a net of steel wire, this strange phenomenon is to be explained only in two ways. Either the czars who so cleverly recognised the evil must have been unscrupulous cynics, who only

laughed at corruption and had no feeling for the sufferings of their people, or else their power was not sufficient to break that of their servants. The omnipotence of autocracy must have found its limits in the omnipotence of the oligarchy of functionaries. The first of the possible explanations may be set aside without further consideration. The autocrats, without exception, have desired the good of their people, and have been personally upright men and lovers of justice. If they had been strong enough to create a trustworthy and industrious official service, instead of their idle and corrupt one, they would certainly have done so. Only the second explanation, then, is possible. The power of the Czardom has had to capitulate to that of the oligarchy of officials.

This explanation, however, requires a further one. What wrecked the attempts of well-intentioned autocrats at reform? These men were grievously in earnest; and open opposition to orders of the Czar is absolutely unthinkable, when punishments such as exile to Siberia are given for much slighter offences. Is it possible that the Russian nation stands morally so much lower than all others, that honest and industrious servants of the State are not to be found at all? It would be hard to believe. For if men are approximately alike in any one particular it is in average morality. The Russian is not more immoral or dishonourable than the German or the Frenchman. Fifty years ago the officials in Austria and Hungary also were still very corrupt, and

Frederick William I. was obliged, even in morally strict Prussia, to use all his energy in taking steps against the State officials, who acted on the principle of the proverb, "Give me the sausage, and I'll quench your thirst" (Gibst du mich die Wurscht, lösch' ich dich den Durscht). Besides, the experiment of regenerating the official service with foreigners has also been tried in Russia, especially by Alexander II. In the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg I came upon a little French pamphlet in which a Russian patriot laments in the most passionate terms the fact that the Czar Alexander II. was surrounded by an impenetrable wall of officials from the Baltic provinces, who let no one but those of their nationality rise on the rounds of the official ladder. The complaints made of the rule of officials were, however, the same, although it was not denied that in industry and honesty the Germans from the Baltic provinces surpassed the native Russians. Under Alexander III. unmistakably orthodox opinions and the purest possible Russian descent were necessary in order to gain the good-will of the omnipotent Pobyedonostzev and of the Slavophiles. The misery, however, remained the same, except that it was in some degree relieved by the greater corruptibility of the native Russians. For—to show the utter preposterousness of the whole system—the Russian people find it much pleasanter to deal with bribe-taking officials than with honest ones. You may hear it said often enough in Russia, "The Russian autocracy is alleviated by the rouble ; with-

out the troublous life would be utterly unendurable." Some fatal cause must therefore exist which prevents any improvement of conditions. Even evils do not grow old without some necessary reason for their existence.

In order to explain this there must be clearly understood what the Russians really complain of in their officials. They thought themselves no better off under the system of Alexander II., with the infusion into the service of more honest and industrious elements. Hence it appears not to be primarily the dishonesty or idleness of the bureaucracy which provokes the most complaints. No, this is the reason. What drives the Russians to despair, and what they feel to be the grossest evil of the country, much more than the domination of a single czar, is the tyranny of the official caste, which forms a State within the State, and has set up a special code of official morality quite peculiar to itself. As to how far the possibility of such a class development is consistent with the autocracy as such, will be inquired into below. A ring of officials is not absolutely excluded even in republics, as is shown by Tammany Hall in New York. Only in constitutional States it rests with the people to put an end to evil once recognised, but in an autocracy it does not. Before going further, however, one must explain to the foreign reader what is really meant by such a tyranny.

Let us say, then, for example, that you have

been seen in the street with a person who, for some reason, and naturally without knowing it himself, is under police surveillance. Of course, you yourself are from this moment under suspicion, and therewith delivered up to the official zeal of the whole widely ramified organisation, for the protection of the holy order. From that time forth letters directed to you do not reach you, or else bear a mark showing that by a remarkable accident they were found open in the letter-box, and had to be officially sealed. You are surprised some night by the visit of an officer and of a dozen sturdy police officials, who rouse your children from their beds and search through your house from garret to cellar. If there should happen to be found in your possession a German translation of a novel of Tolstoi's, or any book or newspaper which stands on the police index, with which you naturally are not acquainted, off you go to prison with the agents of the law. Here you remain, well taken care of, pending a thorough-going investigation of the facts of the case. This lasts from three days to six months, as the case may be, according to your popularity or to the influence which your friends are able to bring to bear. It is not the slightest protection for you that you are a well-known householder, a busy physician or lawyer, of whom it might be assumed that even without imprisonment you would not immediately turn your back on the place of your profession. To prevent the danger of collusion, so that you may not hide the traces of

your crime, you remain to the end under lock and key, with the invaluable right to maintain yourself meanwhile at your own expense. You will endure this little inconvenience calmly, as becomes a man, hoping that your friends will take care of your wife and children during this time, and not let them actually starve. It is certainly unpleasant if your pretty daughter, who is studying history or art or philology, attracts the eye of the Sacred Inquisition and is carried off some night as a political suspect, no pleading of yours enabling you to learn in what prison she is kept, pending investigation. It is still more vexatious for you to know that your young son—a student—is in the hands of the police, since this young man has not yet learned self-control, and may possibly come to blows with his tormentors, who drive him so far that, finally, in order to put an end to his sufferings, he sets himself on fire with his own kerosene lamp, and ends his life. I cite here only facts which came to my knowledge from the circle of highly respected families, which I met during my stay of barely seven weeks. You yourself are, according to the degree of your offence, expelled for several years from the place of your profession or, at the worst, exiled to Archangel or Siberia. Finally, you do not need to have committed a crime. It is quite enough that you are not found loyal and respectful to the police.

These clearly are little unpleasantnesses which do not sweeten life for the citizen or greatly increase his loyal sentiments. They exert, however,

a much more injurious effect on those who are in a position to inflict such torments on people who are at all in their disfavour. Travellers tell of tropical madness, which seizes Europeans in the torrid zone. Since my experiences in Russia - am no longer inclined to regard this phenomenon as climatic. There is only one madness, that is the frenzy of domination, to which every morally weak person is exposed when his lust for power meets with little or no opposition. This phenomenon is not less well known in our barrack-rooms, where discipline breaks down all opposition, than in prisons. Non-commissioned officers, and also many officers and prison officials, are easily seized with this madness, which is nothing but Cæsarian madness on a small scale. The German abroad, especially the young German noble, is most easily susceptible to it. He even likes to make up a little in the primitive East for the strict provincial training to which he was subjected at home. Hence the preference of Alexander II. for German officials caused no improvement in this respect.

In addition to the mad lust of power, which in itself is bad enough, there is, however, something else. The best people in Russia do not select the political or police services. The pay is wretched, and can only be supplemented by illicit revenues. These illicit revenues arise from prompt releases from formalities, for which the interested persons show themselves grateful, and from carrying into effect orders against the Jews, who, for this very

reason indeed, cannot be put on a better footing legally, because if they were, a great part of the official service would lose a principal source of revenue from toleration-money. Men of the better class turn away as a matter of course from a career which depends upon such revenues. Hence it is not exactly the best who serve as executives of the power of the State. In official service there is also another aim—namely, to rise constantly to higher and more lucrative positions. For this there is only one rule, that of maintaining absolute good conduct in the eyes of the higher authorities. The higher authorities, however, consist of chinovniks, who have only one interest, that of the supremacy of their class and the prevention of anything that could injure its omnipotence. So it goes on up to the highest official ; to the man to whom primarily is entrusted the protection of the Czar and of the autocracy—to the Minister of the Interior. Imagine this office held by a man like Plehve, and you will understand what spirit rules among the pashas in the remote Government hamlets. Cæsarian madness, aspiration for higher positions, class interest, all work together to produce libertines and barbarians, entirely devoid of conscience, against whom there is no protection whatever. In a land without a Parliament, or a free press, every complaint has only the effect of a denunciation of the devil to his grandmother. It is rare, indeed, if the official in question is not especially rewarded for his official zeal. The complainant can by no means reckon on

success in bringing an action. It is much better to keep in with the authorities, not to kick against the pricks, but to pay!

And the Czar? Either he hears nothing of all these things or they are represented to him as indispensable for the preservation of order. If it is hard to make a successful stand even in constitutional States with a Parliament and a press, in the rare enough cases of despotic justice, it is immensely harder where the protection of authority is the highest principle of government, and where no institution whatever exists for the protection of the subject. It should not be at all surprising, then, that the reign of terror from above tries to counteract the terror from below. Indeed, it is only a proof of the patience and gentleness of the Russian people that attempts upon official criminals are so rare. I was therefore the more ashamed when, during my stay in Russia, I read that German statesmen were hurling words of condemnation against Russian patriots who, careless of their own lives, had declared war against the brutal officials. However far the desire to preserve a good neighbourly relationship may go, a German politician does not need to ingratiate himself with the Russian régime. In doing so he exposes himself to the condemnation which that régime invariably calls forth when people know its administrative methods. German authorities ought not to lend their assistance to a body which a patriot and strong monarchist like Prince Ukhtomsky, the friend of the Czar, called

a camorra, a band of anarchists in office. Our sympathies ought rather to go out to those who strive to gain for Russia also a court where the shackled nation can bring its cry for help to a hearing, to a Parliament, however modest, to a press not subjugated by the tyranny of the police. Only these means can a nation full of good qualities be freed from the reign of terror of the chinovniks, from the camorra of officials.

CHAPTER XII

RUSSIA'S FINANCIAL FUTURE

I

If Russian statesmen could speak out—Fighting efficiency and its economic cost—The official attitude to education—A great detective bureau—Going backward—Living behind the Great Wall—The coming catastrophe

I HAD a long and exhaustive conversation about the material welfare of the Russian people with a statesman to whose identity I am not at liberty to furnish even the slightest clue, if I am faithfully to carry out my promise to guard against his recognition as my informant. They were several hours of searching criticism, such as I had never listened to, from a man who through long years had himself been active in a prominent position, an outpouring quite permeated by the most hopeless pessimism, and stated with a passion that contrasted oddly with the grey hair and deeply furrowed face of the speaker. My references to him were of such a nature that he felt it safe to allow himself the most uncompromising plainness of statement. But I carried away the impression that it would be

sufficient to give the Russian statesmen the possibility to speak freely, and there would be left no stone unturned in that wicked structure that is called "the Russian Government," so great is already the accumulation of bitter anger even among those of whom it would be supposed that they are the real leaders of the State. The autocracy cannot even utilise the forces that are at its disposal.

"Yes, fate is cruelly upsetting all our calculations with this war," said the statesman, in answer to my question as to the probable effect of the war on the Russian economy. "No one even suspects what catastrophe we are facing, thanks to the policy that is just now celebrating its greatest triumph."

"Is not that a paradox, your Excellency?"

"No, not at all. The triumph of our policy is the money reserve at our disposal, which enables us to mobilise without borrowing. But only near-sightedness can find therein additional justification of this economic policy, which, on the contrary, receives with its triumph also its deathblow."

"May I have a fuller explanation?"

"It may be easily given. Financial and fiscal considerations have destroyed our economy. You are surprised at this statement. But one must understand this system. The creation of a gold reserve, the formation of a fiscal balance even at the expense of the internal forces of the nation, are, under certain conditions, a necessity. For a backward agrarian State it is necessary, before all else,

to join the more advanced countries in fiscal economy and guaranteed values, and if that requires sacrifices, it pays, in the end, in the greater credit facilities, I might say, by the greater financial defence of the State."

"And your Excellency believes that the internal development of the nation was thereby neglected, just as an athlete develops the muscles of his limbs at the expense of his heart muscles?"

"Certainly; I accept the analogy. We increased our fighting efficiency, and have paid for it by internal weakening. I repeat that there was no other way, if we ever were to pass from the natural to the money system. This would be the right time to employ the credit thus secured for internal strengthening. But the war has upset our calculations, and not only has it consumed our cash reserves, but will also compel us to make new sacrifices. We are in the position of a man who is still out of breath from running, but must begin running anew in order to save his life, and may only too easily get a stroke of apoplexy."

"Has not the industrial development in the western part of the country strengthened the national finances?"

"No; on the contrary, it has involved sacrifices. And we cannot expect salvation from these either. We have a yearly increase of two million souls, and our entire industry does not employ more than two million workmen. Our national existence must still depend for a long time on our agriculture, and this,

so far from advancing, is becoming poorer from year to year."

"On account of the industrial policy?"

"No; but you should not forget that this industrial policy has by no means mastered the system. Nay, had the spirit whence our industrial policy originated been the ruling spirit, our agriculture would also have been in a better position; for that spirit is the spirit of enlightenment. But now the strength of the soil is decreasing; and the peasant has no manure, nor is he acquainted with any systems of cropping under changed conditions of fertility."

"And why is nothing done for the improvement of his economic insight?"

"You must ask that of the gentlemen of the almighty police and not of me. I am of the humble opinion that hunger is beneficial neither to the soul nor to the body; but in that department where there is more power than in ours, it is believed that knowledge is under all conditions injurious to the soul. Also that too many people should not come together and take counsel of one another; in the opinion of our Government no good can come of it. We had appointed commissions for the uplifting of the peasantry, for road construction, for the regulation of questions of credit. But the results always were only conflicts between the provincial corporations, the *zemstvos*, and the Government."

"What was the cause of these conflicts?"

"The tradition and the guiding principle of the

present system, which I can only designate as the principle of gagging. An administration that does not oppress the peasantry is not yet to be thought of. Our peasant needs nothing so much as travelling agricultural teachers. But what would be the end of such teaching ? To Siberia direct. Fear of the intelligent classes has already become a mania. Intelligence, if it pleases you, is revolution ; anything rather than contact with Liberal elements. The salvation of our people lies in its isolation."

"But that is the régime of a conquered country ! Are not the rulers, themselves Russians ? How can they be so cruel to their own flesh ?"

"The police official is no Russian. He is quite free from national sentiment ; he is only an oppressor, a detective. Our Ministry of the Interior is merely a great detective bureau, a monstrous and costly surveillance institution. When the notorious 'third division' was abolished and subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior it was considered a step in advance. But it was not the Ministry of the Interior that absorbed the 'third division,' but the reverse. We no longer have administration, but only surveillance, arrest, deportation. Shall I tell you ? Our commission worked honestly. It consisted of noblemen, high-minded patriots, who took part in working out a project for the improvement of economic conditions. Only three hundred copies of the report were printed ; it was not meant for general circulation. But the result of the labours undertaken at our instance was the arrest of the

outspoken, upright critics. Do you consider that an encouragement for patriotic endeavour? Our merchants and our zemstvos have opened, in the last six years, one hundred and thirty-six schools without one kopeck of State aid, and with a yearly expenditure of four million roubles. The instinct for what is necessary is therefore present. Our society should only be let alone and we also might go through the same development, perhaps in a slower measure, which Germany has passed through with such momentous success in the last thirty years—from an agricultural State dependent on the weather to a mighty industrial country. But Germany is a constitutional State and we are a police State. Many has a middle class; we have none, and the formation of such a class is prevented by every possible means. The commercial schools are subjected to annoying conditions because they are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance where, naturally, a different spirit prevails. The commercial guilds are making enormous material sacrifices, spending annually, besides the four millions for maintenance, five additional millions on buildings, only to retain their autonomy, to keep in their own hands the staffs of instruction and inspection, and to possess a greater elasticity of adaptation to local conditions. This sacrifice is overlooked, and the slightest exhibition of free initiative is jealously suppressed."

"Your Excellency, I find that one cannot discuss the least question of pedagogy or economics in Russia without touching high politics."

"Very true. You may see from that to what a pass we have come. We have been going backward uninterruptedly for the last twenty years. The nobility is losing its estates because it has not learned to manage them, and cannot to this very day recover from the abolition of serfdom. But the land does not fall into the hands of the peasants who need it, but into those of the merchants. The agricultural proletariat remains unprovided for. The peasant cannot raise the taxes. The soil here gives fourfold returns; in Germany eightfold returns. It pays at the same time, this side of the Dnieper, 10 to 15 per cent. annually for tenure; in England 2 to 3 per cent.; in France and Germany 4 to 5 per cent.; and on the other side of the Dnieper, where long tenures are in vogue, 5 to 6 per cent. Remember that this is a yearly tenure. It is a premium on soil robbery. Sixty roubles for the tenure of one desyatina! The peasant cannot raise that amount, and yet he is compelled at the same time to pay taxes. Year after year hunger visits entire provinces, for the peasants are utterly impoverished and have not even seed. With an empty stomach and a gloomy mind the peasant must bear family, communal, and Government burdens."

"I read something similar two years ago in a book by an Englishman."

"You mean 'The Condition of Russia,' by Lanin, from the *Fortnightly Review*."

"Quite right, your Excellency. But I considered

the description overdrawn. Moreover, I cannot see why abuses should be so forcibly drawn as in that book, whose statements your Excellency now confirms, without any prospects of redress being suggested."

"Who is to give redress?"

"The Czar."

"The Czar is living, as it were, behind the Great Wall of China. He has never visited a 'duma' (city council), nor a 'zemstvo' (district council), nor a village, nor an industrial centre. He is kept by the camarilla in constant dread, and is so closely watched that he does not see a finger's-breadth of heaven much less of earth. He rejoices when an occasional quarrel breaks out among his ministers, for then he has an opportunity of learning here and there a fragment of truth."

"And doesn't any one succeed in representing to him conditions as they are?"

"I will make a confession to you. Not very long ago I myself prepared a paper, not bearing my name —this would have offered certain difficulties—but anonymously, and had it transmitted to the Czar by a trustworthy person. For eight days there was great joy at the court. The Emperor and the Empress were delighted to know where the trouble lay and how it was to be remedied. Then the whole matter, as it were, vanished and was forgotten."

"That shows great weakness."

A shrug of the shoulders was his answer, "Above

all things there is great anxiety at and fear of responsibility. There is also a weakness on account of conscientious scruples. The Emperor knows nothing thoroughly enough to enable him to overcome the arguments of a skilled sophist, and he is too indulgent to say to one of his counsellors, 'Sir, you are a cheat.' He hears in the reports only praise of somebody, never any censure. For he has a great dread of intrigue, and not without good reason. The atmosphere surrounding every autocrat is terrible. The Czar is pathetically well-meaning, and is modesty itself, but he is not the autocrat for an autocracy. That requires a man equal to his task."

"And what, in your Excellency's opinion, should be done to help the country?"

"No more than the rest of the world has already accomplished. Abolition of the police system, security of personal freedom, abolition of the censorship, discontinuance of the persecution of sectarians, who are our best subjects, and, I say the word quietly, a constitution."

"And would the country really be helped thereby?"

"Unquestionably. With these little concessions to-day any political convulsion could be avoided, and the intelligent class freed from its fetters. No one knows what will be offered ten years hence."

"Are there any prospects of this concession?"

"Not the slightest. On the contrary, whoever falls under the suspicion of approving of the present

system may be at any time ruined mentally and morally."

"What will be the end, then ?"

"The end will be that the terror from above will awaken the terror from below, that peasant revolts will break out—even now the police have to be augmented in the interior—and assassination will increase."

"And is there no possibility of organising the revolution so that it shall not rage senselessly ?"

"Impossible. Our rural gentry is, to be sure, not aristocratic; but the strength of the régime consists in the exclusion of any understanding between the landowners and the peasants because of the social and intellectual chasm between them."

"Your Excellency, I remember a saying of Strousberg's, who was a good business man, 'Nowhere is there a hole where there once was land.' One learns to doubt that here in Russia. There is no one with whom I have spoken who would fail to paint the future of this country in the darkest colours. Can there be no change of the fatal policy that is ruining the country ?"

"Not before a great general catastrophe. When we shall be compelled, for the first time, partly to repudiate our debts—and that may happen sooner than we now believe—on that day, being no longer able to pay our old debts with new ones—for we shall no longer be able to conceal our eternal bankruptcy from foreign countries and from the

Emperor—steps will be taken, perhaps, towards a general convention. No sooner."

"Is there no mistake possible here, in what you are saying?"

"Martin Luther hesitated so long as he had not seen the Pope, after that no more. Whoever, like myself, has known the State kitchen for the last twenty-five years, has no longer any doubts. The autocracy is not equal to the problems of a modern great Power, and it would be against all historical precedents to assume that it would voluntarily yield without external pressure to a constitutional form of government."

"We must wish, then, for Russia's sake, that the catastrophe come as quickly as possible?"

"I repeat to you that it is perhaps nearer than we all think or are willing to admit. That is the hope ; that is our secret consolation."

Such was the substance of my long interview with one of the best judges of present-day Russia, from which I have omitted only that which would render their author easily recognisable. For the rest, I must say here that, with slight variations, the statements of all the other competent persons whom I had the opportunity of meeting agreed with those of my present informant. The unwritten public opinion of Russia is absolutely of the same mind in its judgment of existing conditions ; it differs only as to the remedies.

"We are near to collapse, like an athlete with great muscles and perhaps incurable heart weak-

ness," repeated the statesman on parting. "We still maintain ourselves upright by stimulants, by loans, which, like all stimulants, only help to ruin the system more quickly. With that we are a rich country with all conceivable natural resources, simply ill-governed and prevented from unlocking its resources. But is this the first time that quacks have ruined a Hercules that had fallen into their hands? Whoever frees us from these quacks will be our benefactor. We need light and air, and we shall then surprise the world by our abilities and achievements."

CHAPTER XIII

RUSSIA'S FINANCIAL FUTURE

II

A candid banker—A new way to pay old debts—Russia's supposed reserve treasure—The operations of high finance—The cornering of the press—The friendship of Germany—The future of the German investor.

IT was shortly after the Port Arthur naval catastrophe that I sought out a bank director, with whom I had become acquainted, to talk with him about the financial effects of the war, that had had such noteworthy results on the European exchanges. To my astonishment, I found the comfortable bank director very calm.

"The system will still keep us up," said he, evasively, in answer to my question whether Russia would have to force a financial crisis after the war.

"What system?" said I.

The bank director adjusted his eye-glasses and gazed at me with round eyes for a while. Then, with that burst of candour which so often surprises us in the Russians, he began—

"We are not children after all, and neither you nor I is dancing to the Government music to which others are keeping time. We may, therefore, talk it over calmly. Well, we have a great drum with which there can be no marching out of line. It sounds. We have never as yet stopped our payments, as France, Austria, or Turkey have done. We are, therefore, punctual payers, hence we shall again secure money."

"Is this a solid argument?" I asked.

"God forbid," was the answer. "We have paid to secure future credit. But it seems that this policy of honest debtor is wiser than the occasional discontinuance of payment, which allows some advance but involves the loss of credit. We can always repeat to the public that wishes to buy our bonds, 'Russia is honest; Russia pays; you need have no fear here of shrinkage.' And so the public buys."

"But the banker must know that the liberality is not real," I rejoined.

"And if he does know it? Is it the banker's business to initiate the public into the secret sciences? Do not forget that no Government pays to the world such commissions for loans as we do. Prussia pays $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., Austria $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., we pay 3 per cent.; and, between ourselves, it doesn't end with that, but the issuing banks also get their 6 per cent., especially when they appear reluctant at first. Why should a commission of from 3 to 6 per cent. be paid where the business is

as bad as it is? It was Offenheim who said, 'You don't build railways by moral maxims.' And high finance says that dividends and bonuses are not paid with moral maxims."

"According to my perhaps unbusiness-like opinion, this is not much better than stealing."

"Very unbusiness-like, indeed, my friend. The banking world has no Nietzsche to teach it to live as if it were beyond the sphere of good and evil. Ethics, like religion, is only for the masses. Just calculate what a commission of 3 to 6 per cent. means on a loan of five hundred to a thousand million roubles, which we shall surely need in this war. Let us say only 3 per cent. officially. That means thirty millions—more than sixty million marks. Do you think, then, that the banks belong to the Salvation Army, to imagine that they should renounce such a transaction?"

"Stop! Stop! You said at first that Russia will need in this war about a milliard of roubles. That would be contrary to what I have heard from other very reliable sources—namely, that the cash reserve is supposed to be equal to about a milliard of roubles."

"I will bet you that in three months we shall not have a single kopeck left of this milliard, assuming that it exists. In agreement with military experts, who, between ourselves, are not at all optimistic, I estimate the duration of this war at twelve to eighteen months at least. Under our management, every month costs us at least a hundred million

roubles. So you see that a milliard will not be sufficient."

"Well, let us say that the banks cannot refuse the business, still they must, in the first place, dispose of the securities, which will not be so easy, since the French are thoroughly satiated with the bonds, and, as the fall in the rate of exchange has recently shown, confidence in these bonds is no longer any too great."

"They may drop still further," said the banker, smiling. "The fall in the rate of exchange would have been still worse had not our banks received a strict order not to turn over the deposited bonds to their owners during these days of convulsion."

"How? I don't understand this. Do you mean that the issue of the deposited securities to their owners is delayed?"

"Yes, my friend, that is being done. You again do me the honour of forgetting in my office that we are in Russia. Even worse things are done here. At the order of the Minister of Finance, the owners of the bonds who wish to withdraw their deposits are given only a few hundreds or thousands of roubles for the most pressing needs, but they do not get their bonds. This is in order to prevent, by any means, the bonds being thrown on the market and thus increasing the panic."

"But that can be done only here. You have no such power abroad."

"Well, the first alarm did cost a respectable sum. Then the foreign bondholders came to the rescue

and intervened for their own interest. The price of the bonds was maintained, especially in Germany."

"Why particularly in Germany?"

"Because it fluctuates less in France. There it is in the hands of small investors, who do not run to the Treasury at the first opportunity. It is not so strongly entrenched in Germany, and must be supported there."

"Very well, then you support my reasoning, and you say that the bond values are maintained artificially alone. How can you say, then, that the loan may be augmented at will by new issues?"

"I say that, because the buyers are an amorphous mass that crystallises just as little as a combination of producers is met by a combination of consumers. The masses may be frightened for a while, but in the long run they are irresistibly led to spoliation by the great combinations of capital, and the act of creating current opinion is well known in high financial circles."

"You forget the independent press."

The banker made a very peculiar grimace. Then he said, "That's not nice of you. I am speaking to you as if to a member of the profession—like one of the initiated to another. And when we come to speak of your own profession, you turn out to be a simpleton. How can you speak of an independent press, when it is under the pressure of the high finance of the Russian and German Governments?"

"You will pardon me, sir. I honour your up-

rightness equally with that of the greatest of my profession. But I must stop there. Newspapers are still guided by morality. And I am willing to wager anything that among our German papers only a vanishing fraction is susceptible to the arguments of Witte and his associates."

"And what becomes, then, of the millions that our Ministry of Finance is spending to secure good will in the papers towards our finances?"

"I do not want to suspect any one, but those German papers with which I am well acquainted are incorruptible."

"Well, let us say that the Radical or Socialistic press is inaccessible, and cannot be bought either by our Ministry of Finance or by the German bank combinations. There still remains the influence of the German Government, that has its reasons for not allowing Russia to be weakened to too great an extent. For this is still the keystone of the Conservative system in Europe, and this influence suffices to keep the unfriendly critics of our financial conditions from all the leading German papers. That is not even an official favour. I consider it quite logical for serious papers not to play mean tricks on their Foreign Office. But as to the other, the extremely Radical organs, they have no significance for the financial world. And you will not doubt that at present Germany is doing her best to keep us in good humour."

"Yes, I see with shame and resentment how the German Government has been transformed into

something akin to a Russian police ally, with the blessing of Count Bülow."

"Who surely knows what he is doing?"

"Perhaps I myself do not believe that Germany has reason to make an enemy of Russia, though there are certain limits even to friendly services, which limits have long been passed, to the detriment of the dignity of the German Empire.

"I am also willing to believe all that you have told me about the influence of the high finance, the Russian noble, and German diplomacy. Yet I cannot conceive how the mass of investors—and, after all, it is they who are to be considered—will permanently pay a much higher price for securities than corresponds to their intrinsic value, as is the case with the Russian securities, according to the information given me by Russian statesmen."

"Permanently? Some day it will stop. But when. Even the autocracy or the social structure will not maintain itself permanently. But meanwhile there is no power on earth to prevent the great banking institutions from earning thirty million roubles or more, when there is a chance. There will be a great bargaining, especially since the French Government will exert itself strenuously to prevent future issue of Russian bonds; for every new issue depresses the value of former issues, and in these a great portion of the French national wealth is invested. In the end, however, German influence will prevail. Germany will advance us the new funds, because Germany wishes to render us a service,

for Germany feels itself from day to day more and more isolated in Europe,¹ and we are still not to be despised, either as friends or enemies, in spite of Port Arthur. Hence the German investor must help us out ; and, after all, he is not making a bad transaction when he buys a 4 per cent. bond at, let us say, 90."

"How so ?"

"Well, the bank interest is now 3 per cent. When four roubles are paid on an investment of 90 roubles having a par value of 100 roubles, then the valuation of Russian Government securities is not quite 70. And that may continue for a long time."

"Do you consider that the real intrinsic value ?"

"The Stock Exchange knows no intrinsic value. It only knows tendencies. A hundred roubles' worth of Russian Government securities can always be disposed of at 70, if everything else holds good."

"You are evading me. I asked for your personal opinion of the intrinsic value of the Russian bonds."

"I will give you an answer. As long as our Russian peasant is able to starve and to sell his grain, as long as there are gendarmes to aid the tax-collector, and people who are willing to make further loans to us, so long is the payment of dividends assured. Beyond that the foreign bondholder has no right to inquire."

¹ This conversation was held in February, 1904, that is, long before the conclusion of the German-English Treaty of Arbitration.

"Please tell me whether, in your opinion, there is a hidden deficit in the Russian Budget or no."

"I say that as long as there are people who are willing to lend to us we shall pay the interest. Were our Budget a real one, we should not need to contract new debts in order to pay the interest on the old ones."

"That is what I wanted to know. And do you consider Russia a really insolvent country, that cannot really pay its debts and cannot bear the burdens of modern national life?"

"On the contrary, Russia is a land intrinsically so rich in untouched treasures, that it only needs another and a just régime for it to pay its debts and assume still further burdens."

"And this other régime?"

The banker pointed to the East. "Our future is being decided there. If it goes hard with us there, it may become better here more quickly than is suspected."

"Hence, worse for the bankers," said I, jokingly.

"People accustom themselves to honesty when there is no other way," answered the banker, also jokingly. "And when universal honesty comes into vogue, it will no longer be a shame to be honest."

With this I parted from the banker, whose pleasing cynicism always amused me, the more so since I recognised in him the essence of sterling and honourable views. Later interviews with other members of the financial world showed me that my first informant expressed the generally-accepted opinion.

Isolated Germany will, for political reasons, and as a favour to the Russian régime, support Russian credit ; the great German banks will not renounce the splendid loan-issuing business ; and the German investor will permit the imposition upon him of the Russian bonds. "Sheep must be shorn," said one of the brokers coolly to me, when I expressed a doubt as to whether the German Imperial Government would pay for its political business with the hard-earned pennies of its investors. "Your Bismarck did not hesitate for a moment to throw Russian values into the street and to destroy thereby milliards of German property, when it suited his political convenience. Your present Government will not be at all embarrassed in sacrificing again milliards of German property to place us under obligation. And, finally, no one is compelled to it. Whoever is not able to calculate enough to see how Wishnegradsky prepared the balances to deceive the eye had better keep his money in his pocket and not buy securities. If he does buy them let him bleed, as he deserves." Another declared, however : "The Germans will buy our bonds. When no other bait is attractive there is still one left to us. When the landowner sells his crops, and is thinking of investing his proceeds, the banker will say to him, 'How about a little of the Russian securities?' 'But aren't they insecure,' answers the good fellow. 'The idea ! That's only a Jewish trick, on account of Kishineff.' And the good fellow will hand over his shekels, for he won't let himself be fooled about Kishineff."

CHAPTER XIV

PLEHVE

I

A police spy—A Machiavelian policy—His only virtue—A human tiger—The man who planned the Kishineff—A monster of ingratitude—Consensus of opinion regarding him.

[Printed in the "Berliner Neuer Montagsblatt" a fortnight before the murder of Plehve.]

IN the winter of 1881 there took place in Cracow one of those great Socialistic trials with which in those days it was hoped in Austria to smother the Socialistic movements which were imported by unscrupulous agitators. The trial is known in the annals of Social Democracy as the proceedings against Warnynski and his accomplices. Thirty-five men were indicted, among them twenty Russians from Volhynia—mostly students of the Polytechnic Institute in St. Petersburg—who had been arrested in the work of agitation in Galicia. The prisoners noticed during the proceedings that they were conducted one at a time, under one pretext or another,

out through a special door of the court-room, and they could discover no explanation of this strange course of action. Finally, one of them in passing through the door found the reason. It was a double door provided with a deep niche. In this niche was a Russian functionary acting as a voluntary menial to the Austrian police, and at the same time as a spy in the Russian service, who took this opportunity of taking cognisance of those of his own people who were led through. Of course the matter did not end without the gravest insults to those caught, who could only be protected against further abuse by the court constabulary. And this police devotee, who showed such zeal in putting down international revolution, was none other than the present all-powerful figure in Russia, His Excellency the Minister of the Interior, M. von Plehve, at that time "States Attorney" in Warsaw. With such a piece of spying, which the Poles remember very well to this day, this fortune-favoured statesman made his *début* in the world outside Russia. He has remained true to his character. For one not a Russian it will be well to transform M. Plehve from the superhuman dimensions to the every-day human, and if this is done the case will appear slightly altered.

I understand it as follows :—Plehve comes from the attorney and police career. Something of this origin sticks to every one who has sprung from this source. Judges who have been State attorneys are the terror of barristers on account of their inquisi-

torial manner and their inclination to look upon every one accused as guilty. Further, the being occupied with police agents is least conducive to promoting scrupulousness. One remembers Puttkamer's words, "*Gentlemen* do not offer themselves for this service." The constant fear of assassination, for which a chief of the Russian police has good reasons—Plehve spends annually 80,000 roubles on his personal safety—does not help to make any one more kindly disposed to mankind in general.

His politics are stamped with all the characteristics of a police origin, that is, police in the Machiavelian sense, crime in the service of order. In all Russia I spoke to no one who would have chosen for the description of Plehve's character any other expressions than those which serve for the delineation of the lowest level of moral existence. I shall here try to n a sketch of Plehve in accordance with the statements about him, which were made to me with perfectly astonishing unanimity.

One must do justice to every one. It should be mentioned at the outset that in a land of universal venality the reputation of Plehve had this advantage, he was said to be absolutely unbribable. That is a great deal, a very great deal, when one considers that in Russia certain legislative acts are quite openly traceable to the bribery of this or that high functionary. Suspicion, which as a rule does not even spare princes, never once tainted him. But little account do the Russians take of this characteristic. Probably

they would prefer it if his other evil traits were a bit softened by the vice of venality. For Plehve passes for something far worse than a spendthrift or a rake. He is a rascal without scruples, an utterly heartless cynic, a "va banque" player,¹ a swindler to whom a political career or the playing with human lives means nothing more than a pleasant nerve stimulant—in short, a tiger clothed in human form. At the same time he has the most charming manners, is delightful and entertaining, and possesses the most true-hearted face possible. His incredible falseness is the next thing about which all complain who have had doings with him. "Every word that he speaks is a lie," is the assertion which one oftenest hears about him. The criminal element in his tactics consists not only in the fact that he persuades the C₂ that revolution is at hand, and keeps him in continual, nerve-killing anxiety by means of threatening letters, proclamations, and so forth, which he causes to be smuggled into the Emperor's pockets, but still more in the fact that he actually provokes disorders, in order to be able to use them as arguments and to strengthen his position, and in the further fact, that he is continually discovering conspiracies and handling the supposed members in the most fearful way in order to prove his indispensability. The whole store of police tricks, which have been played on despots, in order to turn autocrats into willing tools of their Pretorians, has been pillaged by Plehve in order to bring his

¹ One who risks everything on one card.

system to a state of perfection. In particular the Jews and the Poles must suffer in order to contribute to the danger of the situation—i.e., the indispensability of Plehve. Not a soul in Russia doubts that the Kishineff massacres were the direct result of his commands; the cynicism with which he rewarded Krushevian, the leading agitator from Bessarabia, with which he took under his protection the agitator Pronin, who had been insulted by a congress of teachers, is a shameless acknowledgment of his deed, which, to say more, he only repudiates before foreign countries, not, however, before his confidants. He seizes upon every little thing in order to make some big affair out of it. In Warsaw the widows of the members of a committee, which had collected money for a Polish hospital corps, were stoned by students. Immediately a telegraphic order was sent to investigate the thing most thoroughly, and if those who were the sufferers had not refused all assistance to the police another couple of dozen would-be rioters would have been sent to Siberia, in order that the existence of a Polish revolution might be proved. A Russian editor, whose paper had been suppressed because of the publication of a revolutionary poem, sought audience of the head of the censorship at the Ministry of the Interior, in order to obtain permission for the reappearance of the paper. The chief of the department explained to the editor, according to a Russian nobleman, that if he would simply declare to the minister that the revolutionary

poem had been smuggled into the paper by Jews, he would immediately obtain permission to publish his paper again ! From a source whence I never should have expected such a statement—from a highly Conservative aristocrat, an "Excellency" in the service of the State—I received in all seriousness the information that it was only Plehve, in league with Alexeieff, who had conjured up the war by holding off the Japanese, simply because in this way he would become so much the more indispensable. Nay, more, it was even indicated to me that the Nihilists who killed Alexander II. at the very moment when the proclamation of a constitution lay upon the table awaiting his signature, could not have found their way to the Imperial carriage without help from the police. And the ally of Loris Melikoff, the man who had drawn up the plan, and who best of all knew how near its signature the proclamation was—which must be avoided—was none other than Plehve ! His instinct drove him to the ranks of the reactionaries, for there is little use for people of his calibre in a constitutional State. His anti-Semitic tendencies, which he naturally disavows to every Jewish visitor, are only assumed because people in high position and influence, like the Empress-Dowager, Prince Sergius, and others of the generation of Alexander III. are fanatically anti-Semitic. So even this in him is not genuine. Nothing is but his theatrical ambition to assert himself as long as possible, and to have the nerve-tickling of a tight-rope walker who balances on his wire rope over fixed bayonets.

That is the picture of the Minister of the Interior as public opinion in Russia paints it. I must confess that the picture is as little to my taste as is the man. But while the great Russian novelists surpass all masters in the art of shading, political public opinion likes to work with the strongest colours, and with three-piled hyperbole.

To the other evil influences that work on Plehve and others, must be added the fact that as Non-Russians (Plehve is of Polish-Lettish-Jewish origin), they must distinguish themselves by special Russian Chauvinism, in order to keep themselves free from suspicion. There is nothing great about Plehve—his whole ministerial career does not show one single remarkable action. He is an official who has risen, who will use any means to keep himself uppermost, and considers he has the right to cross the intrigues of his rivals with every means in vogue. "Voila tout"! Love of truth is generally not known in the so-called public life of Russia. It would, therefore, be unjust to count M. Plehve's mendacity as a special vice with him; it has only developed to a specially boundless degree.

One must admit that this description is far removed from being a pleasant one. Add now to these traits the positive fact that M. Plehve denounced to the General Governor (Count Muravieff) his own Polish foster-parents, who had, so to say, picked him up out of the gutter and educated him, so that they, in return for their benevolence, were sent to Siberia; Plehve thus beginning his career with

an act of the vilest ingratitude and treason. (Read Struve's *Oswoboschdenije* and you will get so much black colouring that you will gladly dispense with all other tints.)

The most characteristic thing, however, that I heard about Plehve's system was the answer I received when I asked a gentleman in high position if any improvements were to be expected if Plehve were overtaken by his inevitable fate.

"No," was the reply. "Richly deserved as any doom might be, we would gain nothing from it. All that would happen would be that another man would be put in his place. That's all. Plehve is only a very ideal product of what the system demands. A Police State needs people who are inclined to such a service, and it will ever find them. Plehve is infected with every vice except that of bribery, but he is in no way unique in the Russian official world."

It is in no way probable that anything better would follow. If all Russia really hopes that he will soon be driven away, that is not because one promises oneself an improvement of the conditions thereby, but because one wishes to experience some satisfaction when the measure of such a . . . is full. A philanthropist and friend of justice will as little think of being Home Minister under this rule of Absolutism as of being Chief Executioner. Only another system can produce other men. The Gallows system can only get on with ministers of the Gallows order.

CHAPTER XV

PLEHVE

II.

Premeditated murder—Measures of precaution—A fatal cynicism—What the Königsberg case revealed—Something worse than an Absolute Government—Victims of Siberia and the knout.

[Written on the day Plehve was murdered.]

He has been judged—even in Russia. His assassination seemed so inevitably certain that, months before, in circles far removed from revolutionary intentions, the question was raised as to who would take his place when Fate should have overtaken him. The following words are said to have come from an official in the Russian Home Office, a direct subordinate of Plehve: "If Plehve is shot, Witte will take his place."

Far removed from the Russian atmosphere, it is difficult to comprehend the cold-blooded, business-like way in which the chances were spoken of whether the whole army of police officials which he kept for his own personal safety would be able to protect

him or no. It was a known fact that nobody was admitted to his presence without being searched through and through, and yet nobody doubted that he would be done away with. "There is no protection for a man like him," people used to say.

A Russian author and nobleman, who had asked for an audience, told me how the "searching" was done. A well-dressed footman entered the anteroom where he was waiting, addressing him by his Christian as well as by his surname. "His Excellency will be pleased to see you; you bear a noble name. I knew your father. How should I not? You are of such a good Russian family. Yet, excuse me, your suit is not quite in order. Permit me to straighten your waistcoat; just so, and your coat tails. Very good. His Excellency will be here immediately." To such procedures noblemen have to submit, and yet no wall of police officials or faithful servants can protect any one from such furious hatred; a hatred which is daily fanned by the best of the land. I do not doubt that even to the last no precautionary measure was omitted. But retribution had to come!

What was it that inflamed the hatred of a whole nation against a single man to such an extent? I believe only his cynicism. He was not any better nor any worse than any other member of the Russian camorra of officials, which latter is made up according to the principle of choosing the worst, and does not suffer honest elements within its ranks. But he was the most cynical of all—an adept in infamy.

The Russians know that their "system" has no pity, and that their officials take the place that an army of occupation takes in the country of a defeated nation. Yet they still distinguish between blindly devoted slaves of autocracy, or fanatics of discipline, and the experts of Machiavelism, from whom every satanic provocation might be expected, and who laugh at their victims into the bargain, like the Sadist at those who are tortured. It was known that Plehve was absolutely free from convictions, and therefore his lack of scruple was even more difficult to forgive. It was a known fact that he revelled in the enjoyment of power, like an upstart in the devotion of servile souls, and the nation would not endure it any longer that its Blood should continue to intoxicate an ambitious place-hunter.

Its Blood is no exaggeration. The Königsberg legal action has given at the right time to the most indolent Philistine, who generally closes his ears willingly to the cries of despair of a down-trodden people, some idea of the practices of the Russian police régime. The "knouting" and murdering of young men and women students, the butchering of unruly prisoners, the annihilation of numerous families, have been proved at law to be the weapons of that form of government which bandits of officials wield over defenceless citizens. Let us hope that this case may at last stop the mouths of the official party from making any further vexatious complaints about the Terrorists. For even the enemies of the Terrorists must own that

it is no question of lawful order and government in Russia—nor, indeed, of criminals who rise up in arms against it—but that what really exists, is war to the knife between the nation and the camorra of officialdom which fate has imposed upon it. Even under an Absolute Government rights and laws can exist; but that which is counted as the régime in Russia to-day is attested as inhuman and arbitrary. The opposition of the Terrorists may be unwise, but it is certainly not infamous. The hero of Kishineff does not deserve the protection of humanity. The same impertinence which permits Russian captains to fire upon neutral vessels, and even destroy British fishing-boats, provokes the self-defence of those tortured and tormented.

But the murders of Kishineff are the least of the deeds that the assassinated had on his conscience—they were only the most alarming. The constant intriguing was the chief source of evil. If he was fated to be slain without any hope that some one better would arise from the camorra of officials, it was because he was clearly an adept at frightening the Czar, who is full of noble impulses, yet, thanks to Plehve's police tricks, is constantly fearing assassination, and who has gradually let himself be persuaded into the idea that the way to reform means the way to the scaffold. It is of great, very great, consequence to Russia whether Plehve's successor is a more discerning, even if not better man. For instance, if Witte came to the front—who has original ideas and the courage to stand by

them—a period of success might dawn on Russia. But it is still doubtful if the camarilla considers itself beaten. Just as Tamerlan Obolenski has been sent to Finland, so in St. Petersburg they will make trial of another trickster.

I have just one more little touch to add to Plehve's picture.

The Office of Agriculture had asked for a report how they could best come to the aid of agriculture. But for M. Plehve this was only an opportunity of getting to know those who differed from him. For those noblemen and estate-holders, who refused to make their hearts a den of thieves, and honestly desired reforms, were arrested, although the reports were kept secret and never made accessible to the public. Of his successor, however, such tricks are not expected—perhaps he will not be quite as crafty. Even that much would be a decided boon to the unhappy Russian nation. An open grave is generally the place to give vent to one's better feelings; yet we cannot let these hold sway to-day, for we dare not forget those thousands who are at his command pining in the snowfields of Siberia and those hundreds who have bled to death from the knout-stripes of his emissaries!

CHAPTER XVI

ARTIST AND PROFESSOR—ELIAS RYEPIN

A great creative artist—A favoured Nihilist—“The Barge Towers”—Versatility of his art—The Nihilist cycle of pictures—Ryepin and Tolstoi.

SHOULD some one assert that there is a great artist in a European capital, honoured by an entire nation as its very greatest master, yet, nevertheless, not even known by name among the great European public, we should shake our heads incredulously, for such a phenomenon is impossible in our age of railways and printer's ink. And yet this assertion would be literally true. There is such a great artist living in a city of a million inhabitants, and recognised by millions, yet of his works even art students outside of Russia have seen but one or two. To make this even more incomprehensible, it should be stated that this artist has attained renown in his country not merely a few years ago, but has created masterpiece after masterpiece for more than thirty years; indeed, his first picture at the World's Fair in Vienna in 1873 was generally recog-

nised as startling. Nevertheless, the name of the master has long been forgotten on our side of the Vistula; it may be because no one found it to his interest to advertise him and thus to provoke emulation among others, but more probably because Russia is a separate world and isolates itself from the rest of Europe with almost barbaric insolence.

There is, however, some advantage for Russia in this isolation from the "rotten West." They are not obliged to pass through all the various phases of our so-called art movement, and therefore are not carried from one extreme to the other, but calmly pursue their own quiet way. They also had the good fortune, whilst the rest of Europe was in a state of conflict over unfruitful theories, to possess really great creative artists, always the best antidote against doctrinarianism. When the one-sided, methodically proletarian naturalism reigned in the West—itself a protest against the shallow idealistic formalism of the preceding decades—Russian literature possessed its greatest realistic poets, Tolstoi, Turgenyev, Dostoyevski, who never overlooked the inner process, the true theme of poetical creation, for the sake of outward appearances, and have thereby created that incomparable, physiological realism that we still lack. And because their great realists were poets—great poets and geniuses—they felt no need of a new drawing-room art, which¹ of necessity goes to the other extreme, the romantic, aristocratic, catholic. They had no Zola, and therefore they needed no Maeterlinck. And it was exactly so

with their painting. Their great artists did not lose themselves, like Manet and his school, in problems purely of light and air without poetical content ; hence to rediscover poetry and to save it for art there was no need for Preraphaelites or Decadents. The great painter is artist, man, and poet, a phenomenon like Leo Tolstoi, therefore the few symbolists who believe they must imitate European fashions make no headway against them.

Imitators can only exist among imitators, by the side of nature's imitators, imitators of Raphael's predecessors.

A single true artist frightens away all the ghosts of the night, and thus decadence plays an insignificant rôle alongside of Tolstoi and Ryepin, whether it be the decadent literature of Huysmans and Maeterlinck, or the decadence of the Neo-romanticists and of the Neo-idealists.

It is time, however, to speak of the artist himself, an artist of sixty, still in the fulness of power, who, besides wielding the brush, occupies a professor's chair at the St. Petersburg Academy. I have just called him professor. He is more than that ; he is, like Leo Tolstoi, a revolutionist, the terrible accuser of the two diabolical forces that keep the nation in its course, the Church and the despotism of government. But, to the horror of the Russian dynasty, be it said, this artist, acknowledged to be the greatest of his country, was never "induced" to abjure the criticism of the prevailing system he made by his painting and to engage in the decorative

court art. His so-called Nihilist pictures, reproduction of which has been prohibited by the police, are, for the most part, in the possession of grand dukes, and, notwithstanding his undisguised opinions, he was entrusted with the painting of the Imperial Council representing the Czar in the midst of his councillors. The Czars have always been more liberal than their administrators. Nicholas I. prized Gogol's "Revisor" above all else, and Nicholas II. is the greatest admirer of Tolstoi. And so Ryepin may paint whatever and however he will. And we shall see that he makes proper use of this opportunity. He is Russian, and nothing but Russian. At twenty-two he received for his work, "The Awakening of Jairus's Little Daughter," an academic prize and a travelling fellowship for a number of years. But before the expiration of the appointed time spent by him in Berlin and Paris he returned to Russia, and produced in 1873 his "Burlaks" (Barge-towers), which attracted great attention at the Vienna Exposition. The thirty years that have passed since then have detracted nothing from the painting. How far surpassed do Manet's "revolutionising" works already appear to us, and still how indelibly fresh these "Barge-towers"! The reason for this is simple—it is no painting of theory but of nature represented as the individual sees it, the masterly impression of an artist, the most concentrated effect of landscape, light, and action. The purely technical problem is subordinated to the whole, to the unity of action and mood, solved

naturally and easily. The problem of the artist to tell us what we cannot forget, to give us something of his soul, his sentiments, his thoughts, is of first importance, just as geniuses of all ages care less to be thought masters of technique than to win friends, fellow-thinkers, and comrades, to share their joys and feelings. From the purely technical standpoint, where is there a painting that presents in a more masterly manner the glimmer of sunlight on the surface of a broad stream—as in this case—and where, nevertheless, the landscape is treated merely as the background? And again, where is the action of twelve men wearily plodding onward, drawing with rhythmic step the boat against the stream, seized more forcibly, more suggestively, than in this plaintive song of the Russian people's soul?

The youth of barely twenty-four years had at one leap placed himself at the head of all contemporary artists. Analogies between him and the artistic career and method of Leo Tolstoi force themselves on us again and again. Tolstoi's sketches from the Caucasus and Sevastopol, and "The Cossacks" are his early works, yet they are the most wonderful that the entire prose of all literature can show. And so it is in this lifelike picture of a twenty-four-year-old youth. Had we no other work of his than the "Bargetowers," we should yet see in him a great master. It is but necessary to look at the feet of these twelve wretched toilers to realise with wonder the characterisation, the full measure of which is given only to genius. How they strain against the ground

and almost dig into the rock ! How the bodies are bent forward in the broad belt that holds the tow-line ! What an old, sad melody is this to which these barefooted men keep step as they struggle up along the stream ? In none of his realistic stories of the ancient sorrow of the Steppe children has Gorki painted with greater insight. A sorrowful picture it is for all its sunshine, and the more sorrowful because no artifice is evident. It means seeing, seeing with the eyes and with the heart, and, therefore, it is art.

It would be wrong, however, to say that Ryepin—in his works as a whole if not in any given instance—has introduced a “tendency” in his choice of solely sorrowful subjects. Such is not the case. There is nothing more exuberant, more convulsing, than his large painting, “Cossacks Preparing a Humorous Reply to a Threatening Letter of Mohammed III.” The answer could not have been very respectful. That may be seen from the sarcastic expression of the intelligent scribe as well as from the effect that his wit has on the martial environment. A moustached old fellow in a white lamb-skin cap holds his sides for laughing ; another almost falls over backward, his bald pate starting out of the canvas. One snaps his fingers ; another, old and toothless, grins with joy ; a third pounds with clenched fist on his neighbour’s almost bare back ; another shuts his right eye as if scenting a doubtful odour ; one with a great tooth-gap is shouting vigorously, while others smile in quiet joy through

the smoke of their short pipes. All these are crowded around a primitive wooden table scarcely a yard wide ; twenty figures, a natural group, one head hiding another, and with all you have an unobstructed view of the camp lying bright in the sunshine and dust and full of horses and men. The effect of the picture is so overpowering that at the mere recollection of it you can scarcely refrain from joining in the hearty laughter of these sturdy, untutored natures. In the entire range of modern painting there is no other picture so full of the strong joy of living.

"The Village Procession," preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow—the finest collection of the master's works—is not gloomy like the mournful song of the "Barge-towers," nor exuberant with serf arrogance and vitality like the Cossack camp, but a fragment of the colourless Russian national life as it really is, a sorrowful human document for the thoughtful observer alone. Tattered muzhiks in fur coats are carrying on poles a heavy sacred image, and behind them crowds the village populace with flags and crucifixes. I will not again emphasise how masterfully everything is noted here, from the gold border of the sacred image to the last bit of dusty sunshine on the village street. Absolute mastery is self-evident in Ryepin's work. We are again attracted in this picture by the great intensity of tone. What harmony there is in it—the mounted gendarme who pitilessly strikes with his knout into the peasant group to make room for

the priests and the local officials ; the half-idiotic, greasy sexton ; the well-fed, bearded priest ; the crowd of the abandoned, the crippled, and the maimed, the brutalised peasants, the old women ! A long procession of folly, brutality, official darkness, ignorance ; a chapter from the history of darkness, the crucifix misused as an aid to the knout, a symbol of the Russian régime that could not be held up to scorn more passionately by any demagogue ; and yet only a street scene which would hardly strike the Moscow merchant when strolling in the gallery of a Sunday because of its freedom from any "tendency."

Then comes a work of an entirely different character, a tragedy of Shakespearean force, a painting that is red on red. Ivan the Terrible holds in his arms the son he has just stricken to death with his heavy staff. It is a horrible scene from which you turn away because of the almost unbearable misery depicted there, and yet you return to it again and again. So great is the conception, so wonderful the insight, so incomparable the technique. The madman, whom a nation of slaves endures as its master, is at last overtaken by nemesis, and he is truly an object of pity as he crouches on the ground with the body of his dying son in his arms. He would fain stop the blood that is streaming from the gaping wound on to the red carpet. He kisses the hair where but a moment before his club had struck. The tears flow from his horrified eyes, and their terror is augmented, for at this last and perhaps

first caress of the terrible father a happy smile plays on the face of the dying son. He had killed his son! Nothing can save him! He the Czar of Moscow, the master of the Kremlin, can do nothing! He draws his son to himself, presses him to his breast, to his lips. What had he done in his anger, that anger so often a source of joy to him when he struck others less near to him and for which he had been lauded by his servile courtiers, since the Czar must be stern, a terrible and unrelenting master!

Shakespeare has nothing more thrilling than this single work, its effect so tragic because the artist has succeeded in awakening our pity for this fiend, pity which is the rebound from hatred and resentment. The pity that seizes us is identical with the awe of the deepest faith, the feeling of Christian forgiveness. We can have no resentment towards this sorrow-crushed old man with the torn, thin, white hair. And we can never quite forget the look in these glassy, old eyes from which the bitter tears are gushing, the first that the monster had ever shed. And how the picture is painted, the red of the blood contrasting with the red of the Persian rug and the green-red of the tapestry. Nothing else is seen on the floor except an overturned chair. The figures of the father, and of the son raising himself for the last time, alone in all the vast space, rivet the gaze of the spectator. With this painting hanging in rulers' palaces the death sentence would never be signed again.

Yet another ghastly picture shows that the artist,

like all great masters, is not held back by affectation and feels equal to any emergency. It represents Sophia, the sister of Peter the Great, who from her prison is made to witness the hanging of her faithful "strelzy" (sharp-shooters) before her windows. It was a brotherly mark of consideration shown her by the Czar. The resemblance of the princess to her brother is striking ; but the expression of pain, anger, and fear on the stony face turned green and yellow is really terrifying. But it is also characteristic of the great master to have chosen just that incident in the life of the great Czar.

In general it must be said that for a professor in the Imperial Academy the choice of historical subjects is curious enough. It certainly does not indicate loyalty.

I could not, if I would, discuss in detail the fruits of thirty years of the artist's activity. Besides, mere words cannot give an adequate idea of the beauty of his works. But there is one thing that may be accomplished by the description of his most important painting—namely, the refutation of the absurd notion that the artist and his art can become important only when they are entirely indifferent to the joys and sorrows of their fellow-men and concern themselves solely with the solution of artistic problems. The doctrine of art for art's sake has no more determined opponents than the great artists of our time, and among them is Ryepin in the front rank. He is willing to subscribe to it just in so far as that every artist must seek to

exert his influence only by means of his own peculiar art ; yet he rejects the absurdity that it is immaterial for the greatness of the artist whether he depicts the essence of a great, rich, and deep mind or only that of a commonplace mind. According to him, only a great man who is at the same time a warm-hearted, upright, and courageous man can become a great artist ; and he regards it as the first duty of such to share the life of their fellow-men, to honour humanity even in the humblest fellow-being, and to strengthen with all his might the call for freedom and humanity as long as it remains unheeded by the powerful. Just like Tolstoï, he has only a deep contempt for the exalted decadents who, with their exclusive and affected morality, would attack nations fighting for their freedom. Like every independent thinker, he is disgusted with the modern epidemic of individualism, and his sympathies belong to the progressive movement derided by the fools of fashion. To be sure that does not make him greater as artist, for artistic greatness has absolutely nothing to do with party affiliations ; neither does it make him less, for his artistic achievements are not at all lessened by his giving us sentiments as well as images. But if a humane, altruistic, cultured man who finds joy in progress stands ethically higher than the exclusive, narrow-minded reactionary or self-sufficient, surfeited decadent, then Ryepin is worth more than the idols of snobs. And not as a man only ; he also stands higher as artist, for he gives expression with

at least the same mastery, and, in truth, with an incomparably greater mastery, to the ideals of a more noble, greater, and richer mind. The belief that participation in the struggles and movements of the day affects the artist unfavourably is ridiculed by him; the contrary is true in his case. It has given him an abundance of striking themes as well as the duel and Nihilist cycles.

I will pass by the duel cycle culminating in the powerfully portrayed suffering of the repenting victor. For us the Nihilist cycle is more interesting, more Russian. "Nihilist" is, by the way, an abominable name for those noble young men and women who, staking their lives, go out among the common people to redeem them from their greatest enemies—ignorance and immorality. The real Nihilists in Russia are those of the Government, who are not held back even by murder when it is of service to the system, the cynics with the motto, "*Après nous le déluge*"; surely not these noble-hearted dreamers who throw down the gauntlet to the all-powerful Holy Synod and to the not less powerful holy knout!

At the time when the "well-disposed" portion of Russian society had turned away in horror from the Russian youth because a few fanatics had believed that they could more quickly attain their aims by the propaganda of action than by the fully as dangerous and difficult work among the people, Ryepin painted his cycle, which explains why among the young people there were a few who resorted

to murder. Who does not know from the Russian novels those meetings of youths who spent half the night at the steaming samovar discussing the liberation of the people and the struggle against despotism, in debates that have no other result than a heavy head and an indefinite desire for self-sacrifice ? The cycle begins with such a discussion. Men and women students are gathered together, unmistakably Russian, all of them, Slavonic types, the women with short hair, the men mostly bearded and with long hair. In the smoky room, imperfectly lighted by the lamp, they are listening to a fiery young orator. We find this young man again as village teacher in the second picture. He had gone among the people. In one of the later pictures he has already been informed against, and the police search through his books and find forbidden literature. The police spy and informer, who triumphantly brings the package to light, is pictured to his very finger-tips as the gentleman that he is. In still another picture the young martyr is already sitting between gendarmes on his way to Siberia ; and in the last he returns home old and broken, recognised with difficulty by his family, whom he surprises in the simple room. One may see this cycle in the Tretyakov Gallery, and copies of it are in the possession of a few private individuals, persons in high authority, who are above fear of the police ; and one is reminded of the saying so often heard in Russia, " We are governed by the scoundrels, and our upright men are languishing in the prisons."

The Nihilist has the features of Dostoyevski, who was so broken in Siberia that he thanked the Czar, on his return, for his well-deserved punishment, and who became a mystic and a reactionary. In another picture a young Nihilist on his way to the scaffold is being offered the consolation of religion by the priest, but he harshly motions him back.

All these pictures are homely in their treatment. The poverty of the interior, the inspired faces of the noble dreamers, and the brutal and stupid faces of the authorities speak for themselves clearly enough, and no theatrical effects of composition are necessary to impart the proper mood to the observer. On the contrary, it is just this discretion, the almost Uhde-like simplicity that is so effective. Yet a Pobyedonostzev and a Plehve would scarcely thank the artist for these works that for generations will awaken hatred against the system among all better informed young men. However, their reproduction is prohibited.

On the other hand, the drawings which Ryepin made for popular Russian literature are circulated by hundreds of thousands among the people. It is an undertaking initiated by Leo Tolstoi with the aid of several philanthropists, for combating bad popular literature. It is under the excellent management of Gorbunovo in Moscow. There are annually placed among the people about two million books, ranging in price from one to twenty kopecks. It may be taken for granted that the men who enjoy

Tolstoi's confidence will not be a party to barbarism. The foremost artists supply the sketches for the title-pages, among them Ryepin, the fiery Tolstoian. Ryepin's admiration for the great poet of the Russian soil is also evident from his numerous pictures of Tolstoi. He has painted the saint of Yasnaya Polyana at least a dozen times—at his working-table; in the park reclining under a tree and reading after his swim; a bare-footed disciple of Kneipp; or following the plough, with flowing beard, his powerful hand resting on the plough-handle. All are masterly portraits, and, above all things, they reflect the all-embracing kindness that shines in the blue eyes of the poet—eyes that you can never forget when their kindly light has once shone upon you.

Public opinion in Russia has been particularly engrossed with a recent picture which furnishes much food for reflection. Two young people, a student clad in the Russian student uniform, and a young gentlewoman, with hat and muff, step out hand-in-hand from a rock right into the raging sea. What is the meaning of it? The triumphant young faces, the outstretched arms of the student exclude the thought of suicide. It has been suggested that it is an illustration of the Russian saying, "To the courageous the sea is only knee-deep." But in that case it would mean, "Have courage, young people; do not fear the conflict; for you the sea is only knee-deep." But it could also be interpreted, "Madmen, what are you doing? Do you not see this

is the terrible, relentless sea into which you would step?" In that case it would be a warning intended for the Russian youth, revolutionary throughout, who would dare anything. This much is certain: the greatest Russian painter, and one of the greatest of contemporary painters, is on the side of these young people, and his heart is with them, even though he may doubt, as many others do, the success of the heroic self-sacrifice. The noble ideals of youth cannot conquer this sea of ignorance and slave-misery. Great and immeasurable as is the Russian nation, nothing can help the country. It must and will collapse, and then will come the hour of release for all, whether noble or poor, to whom the Ryepins and the Leo Tolstoïs have dedicated their incomparably great works. Perhaps this hour is nearer than is suspected. Russian soil is already groaning under the March storms which precede every spring.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE JEWS

Russian sympathy with the Jews—The causes of the persecution—The miseries of the “pale”—The sapping of Jewish morality—The humours of the tragedy—The most unfortunate subjects of the Czar.

THE brutal persecutions of the Jews under Plehve have involved unspeakable misery; but the beneficial effect also is not to be underestimated. The entire public sentiment of Russian society has become friendly to the Jews. In numerous conversations with inhabitants of the chief Russian towns, including people from all strata of society, only once have I heard a word expressing ill-feeling towards the Jews. The speaker in this instance was a colonel of a Cossack regiment, on his way to the front, who assured me, in all sincerity, that the English are a “vile Jew nation!” With this exception, all protested against regarding the Russians as enemies of the Jews. The Jews are victims of the murderous Russian politics, like the Poles, the Ruthenians, and the Liberals. This appeared to be the

generally accepted idea. The natural consequence of this idea is that the Jews have the sympathy of all parties opposed to the Government. While the officials are bringing deliberately false accusations against the Jews, unofficial Russia sides with the latter. The situation is similar to that which existed in the West before the emancipation of the Jews, when Liberal political doctrine was directly inculcating philo-Semitism; the only difference being that among the people of Russia no anti-Semitic feeling whatever exists. Therefore, during any crisis of assimilation consequent upon emancipation, there would be little fear of an anti-Semitic reaction such as that experienced in the West.

There is one class which is pleased by the perpetual hunting down of the Jews by the *Novoye Vremya*, and its offshoots in anti-Semitism. This is the class of small tradesmen, notorious for their dishonesty, who are thankful that they are protected from Jewish competition. For the rest, all Russia wishes the repeal of the laws enacted in restriction of the Jews.

The Government, of course, endeavours to persuade foreigners that to permit the Jews to settle beyond the pale would mean the Judaisation, and the consequent ruin, of all Russia. This assertion is made in spite of their knowledge that the contrary is true. A memorial in regard to the Jews, written in 1884 by Ivan Blioch, and published by the Ministry of the Interior—"The Jewish Question in Russia"—shows by statistics that the greatest per-

centage of pauper peasants is found in the provinces of Moscow, Tula, Orel, and Kursk, where no Jews exist; that the prosperity of the peasantry in the provinces within the pale is incomparably higher than in the territory from which the Jews are excluded. The arrears of revenue in districts in which there are no Jews are three times as great as in the pale. As a result, the land purchased by peasants by means of the peasants' banks is much greater in extent in the latter than in the former districts. The usurers who advance money to the peasants at from 300 to 2,000 per cent. are, without exception, Christians. The assertion that the Jews tempt the people to drunkenness, stands morally upon about the same level as the statement that the Jews are never found engaged in agriculture. The latter statement is true, but only because the Jews are not allowed to live in the open country. Of course the Jews sell brandy where this permission is granted them. But that they would not prefer any other trade to this, every one will believe who knows how very careful the Jews are to avoid drunkenness, and with what danger to them especially the traffic in this poison is fraught, which has such a brutalising effect upon their customers.

All these are only idle excuses in justification of the policy of extermination of the Jews, which policy has in reality a quite different cause. Three conditions have been cited to me, any one of which alone is sufficient to place the unhappy Jews of the great Prison State in an especially bad situation,

and also to expose the régime in all its depravity—a depravity almost incomprehensible to Western Europeans.

The first is the great influence which the rich Russian usurers possess with the authorities. If Shylock is angry with the merchant prince of Venice because the latter lends money without interest, in Russia the rôles of the contestants are reversed. The Jew also exacts usury where he can—no one in seriousness pretends to be surprised at this, in view of the deliberate demoralisation of the pale—but in comparison with his Russian colleague he keeps within modest limits, being, indeed, compelled to do so by his circumstances. He necessarily prefers to keep the debtor solvent rather than to drive him out of house and home, which he, the Jew, moreover, cannot buy in. The Russian usurer, on the other hand, is accustomed to show no mercy, because he calmly seizes the land of his victim, and either leases it, sells it at a profit, or adds it to his own property; for a great part of the Russian usurers belong to the Guild of Village Usurers. These people influence the under authorities with bribes, while the great speculators, the millionaire usurers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, who likewise would have to fear the milder methods of their Jewish competitors, are powerful enough to influence senators and ministers according to their wishes. The Russian usurer, therefore, is the first complainant and enemy of the Jews.

The second and more powerful cause is the spirit of Pobyedonostzev, the fanatic of uniformity. Combining in himself the qualities of jurist, theologian, and scholastic, he is too barren in mental powers to master the conception of a State which should take into account any diversity of creed or race. Above all, however, any toleration would undermine the three pillars upon which alone his conception of the Russian Empire can rest: autocracy, orthodoxy, and Russianism. For the preservation of this Asiatically-uniform, absolutist régime, or, better, of the omnipotence of hierarchy, it is above all things necessary to keep the people in absolute subjection. This, again, is possible only when every chance of learning anything else than their own condition is closed to them. A prisoner who endangered the spirit of blind obedience by a tendency to dispute or deny, could not be tolerated in a prison. As little can the great Russian Prison State endure men who might lead the prisoner to think whether he must be absolutely a prisoner. Of such thoughts, however, the Jews, who are subject to special taxation, are suspected above all others. Their criminality is certainly of the smallest; they are the most punctilious of tax-payers, and, moreover, the best conducted citizens in the world. But they are, heaven knows why—perhaps because of their Talmudic-dialectic training, perhaps also because as pariahs they have little cause to be enthusiastic about the ruling order—they are inexorably subtle critics of all existing things, and so could easily upset the simple

minds of the Russian lower classes. That is the chief reason why they are surrounded by a cordon of terrors. The paternal precaution of the Russian Government is, of course, not much wiser than the conviction so many mothers entertain of the unshaken faith of their children in the story that the stork brought the baby. Quite without Jewish criticism the Russian peasant, under the never-resting lash of hunger, begins to think and to grumble; and although his unruly sentiments express themselves chiefly in the specifically Russian form of the organisation of religious sects, nevertheless each fresh sectarian shows a fresh departure from Pobyedonostzev's ideal of a Russian subject. Upon the organisation of sects, however, the Jews have of course no direct influence whatever.

The third cause of the persecution of the Jews was to be found in the Satanic brain of Plehve, who wished to furnish to the humane Czar, and perhaps still more to the Czaritsa, who has Western European ways of thinking, an indication that without the Jews there would be no opposition whatever in Russia. For this purpose he not only had the Jews entered more strictly on the police registers, if they were guilty of any political offence, such as being present in a forbidden assembly, but he also directly provoked them, in order to drive them into the ranks of the revolutionaries, and thereby to compromise the latter. In Hungary and Bohemia ritual murders were incited in order to give the Jews a lesson to remember, and to make them national—i.e., more Magyar or Czechic

—in feeling, since they stubbornly persisted in remaining German. In Russia, however, they were driven into the camp of the revolutionaries, that they might be extirpated, and that suspicion might be cast upon the latter. Nevertheless, some governors, who in other respects readily complied with the commands given from above, yet dared to step in on behalf of the Jews—contrary to the measures appointed by higher authorities—as for example, Prince Urussov, Governor of Bessarabia, who is to be thanked that, in spite of all the efforts of Krushev, the creature of Plehve, no further outbreaks of the mob against the Jews took place in Kishineff recently.

As personal but nevertheless effectual causes of the persecution of the Jews, the anti-Semitism of the Dowager-Empress and of the Grand Duke Sergius, Governor-General of Moscow, must be mentioned. Respectively wife and brother of Alexander III., they conservatively hold to his opinions. This unfortunate and narrow-minded man had been persuaded by conscience-smitten persons that Jewish army contractors were the cause of the defeat of the Russians in the Turkish war; and it was as hard to get an idea out of his head as to get one in. The inclination of the Grand Duke Sergius to torture human beings amounts to a disease. He can satisfy it most easily upon the defenceless Jews.

The final cause of the persecution of the Jews—and one which is regarded by many people as the weightiest—is the certain income which legislation against the Jews means for every unscrupulous

official. Most of the laws passed against the Jews are quite impossible of execution, or are executed only in a very imperfect way, thanks to the corruptibility of the Russian officials. "Absolutism palliated by corruption," this bitter saying fits the case of the Jews best. Yet what relieves the situation for them in a certain way renders it worse for them in another. It certainly is a question whether the ransom money of one generation will not become the purchase money of the next. The Russian bureaucracy will not be willing to renounce its income from bribes and extortions. Thus it prevents all legislative decrees in favour of the Jews. These poorly-paid, much feared, but still despised officials are, in the inclined plane of their evil consciences, quite as much victims of the system as the Jews, but in a different way. We are all human, whether Christian or Jew, and in the long run, under the operation of the most depraved of all Governments, neither can keep himself pure.

The worst thing that has happened to the Jews, however, is not, as can well be understood, an occasional "pogrom" (riot), in which, to the indignation of all civilised mankind, defenceless people are slain and plundered by command of the authorities. The worst is the restriction to particular zones and to particular callings. That is systematic massacre, a deliberate policy of destruction and extirpation. Even if the misery of the Ghetto has, thanks to the strict abstemiousness of the Jews, failed as yet to kill them in the way that the

peasantry, weakened by alcoholism, are killed in the famine provinces, nevertheless the moral result is frightful. Even the iron family morality of the Jews is shaken in the western governments. A deplorable percentage of prostitutes is made up of Jewesses. Experience shows that sexual depravity is the beginning of every other form of degeneration. Moreover, the matter does not generally end with the individual who sinks into prostitution. The ethical ideas of such a morally defective person spread contagion in a wide circle. Families are broken up, or unchastity makes its way into them. The whole conception of life becomes different when the chastity of women becomes an article of trade, or an object of ironical scepticism. Still, in comparison with their environment even these Jews may be called chaste; for they are merely stained by the barbarism of the Orient. But it is, nevertheless, monstrous that in a Christian country the hard-won sexual morality of a part of the population, once gained, must be endangered only because malevolent politics will have it so. The moral purity of the Jews and of the Teutonic races has redeemed the world from the deep depravity of the Roman decadence. Now a Christian State policy destroys a part of the iron stability of this moral acquisition of humanity.

It is self-evident that whoever can, tries to free himself from the misery of the Ghetto. Even Russian legislation has left some small gates open, and through these the struggling Jews squeeze them-

selves with every exertion of strength and cunning. Then there ensues a battle between brutality and artfulness—one not lacking in elements of humour. The authorities hostile to the Jews try of course to prevent too many of these from escaping from the Ghetto, and from settling in cities which it is desired to keep as free from Jews as possible. The Jews, however, try again and again to evade the prohibitions and the illegally interpreted ordinances, and to settle where there is a possibility of a means of livelihood. Such cities are, for example, St. Petersburg and Moscow. The martyrdom which Jews and Jewesses undergo in order to gain the right to stay in these cities borders on the tragic. A non-resident Jewess is not allowed to study in these places, but may live there as a prostitute. An innocent young girl wished to have herself registered as a prostitute so that she might attend the university, never suspecting what formalities she would have to undergo in consequence. In course of the medical examination, however, the circumstances of the case were immediately discovered, and the young girl was punished for the attempted deception, and sent away.

A well-known Oriental, a man of seventy years of age, had business to execute in Moscow which he did not succeed in finishing before night. No hotel would have taken him in; and he could not endanger any of his friends, for if in the frequent nocturnal rangings of the police in Jewish dwellings a Jewish guest without a passport should be taken, the host

would lose his right of residence. In his difficulty the old man asked a railway official how he could pass the icy-cold night. The man gave him the good advice that he should seek out the only place where a man is permitted to take a room and spend the night without a passport—a brothel. Accordingly, this man of seventy, in order not to freeze, was obliged to pass the night in a room with a drunken prostitute, and sat until morning in a chair, praying. The man who related these facts to me was a Russian author widely known and honoured.

A Jew who for five years has paid the taxes of the first guild in a municipality of the pale, receives permission to leave the pale and settle elsewhere. He must, however, gain permission for each member of his family by going through the strictest formalities. Woe to him if a child has been born to him during that time! *It* cannot qualify, and it may easily happen that the father must return to the pale. A Jewish merchant of the first guild in Moscow tried to obtain permission to send such a child to school. Admission was refused, because he did not possess the necessary papers. The father appealed to the Senate in St. Petersburg, and asked for provisional permission for the attendance of his child at school until the passing of a judgment in that place. The Minister of Justice, Muravieff, however, entered a protest against this. Therefore the father was obliged either to employ private tutors or to let the child grow up without instruction.

Whoever works as assistant to a dentist, and has obtained a certificate, may open an office for himself. The only requirement for this is that it shall be well fitted up, and that nobody shall sleep in it. This facility is granted because of the fact that in Russia there is a great lack of dentists. Yet a Jewish dentist went to a lawyer and complained that he had fitted up his office and had handed in to the police his request for leave to practice. The police had waited three months, then came and explained that, since he had not practised his profession for three months, he must immediately leave Moscow. He was obliged to leave his house immediately, and wander about all night, because he was nowhere able to find lodgings!

Another Jewish dentist, a woman, wished to take her examination. A certificate was demanded testifying to her political blamelessness. When she tried to obtain this it was refused her, since she had no right of residence there, and therefore could not demand a certificate!

The Jews meet these tricks of the authorities with tricks of their own. They pay for a dentist's certificate, fit up an office, and then go into trade in bed-feathers or calico. The police official who wishes to prove whether the dentist's profession is really practised has some rouble notes slipped into his hand. Very recently the Jews have found a means to become known as Christians without baptism, which they shun. Good-natured priests, who receive nothing at all for a baptism, but a good

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fee for a written declaration that X. Y. is an Orthodox Christian, draw up such declarations. The unbaptised Hebrew comes as an Orthodox Christian to Great Russia and carries on business, while the helpful priest receives a little income from him.

In general, the Jew must be able to pay ; in that case life is not hard for him in Russia, where, as I have said, no anti-Semitic feeling whatever exists among the people, and the national characteristics of good-nature, of heartiness, helpfulness, and politeness make life easy and pleasant. But woe to the poor wretch who cannot pay at every step ! Woe to the struggler who wishes to better his lot ! Woe to the lover of justice who dares to fight for his rights or even for the public welfare ! One of the special laws for the Jews is that any one may trample him and injure him unpunished. Of all the unfortunate subjects of the Czar, he is the most unfortunate. His intelligence, his sense of justice are offences against the sacred order of things, which demands stupidity and obedience. Thus exists the entirely incomprehensible condition that a great realm steers towards inevitable economic ruin for lack of economic intelligence, while it possesses five million born financiers, who in the lifetime of a man could change Russia into an economic world Power.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE JEWISH QUESTION

What the real problem is—The Polish Jew—Overcrowded callings—Jew-free cities—No solution within sight.

A VISIT to Russia offers opportunity for an extremely interesting study. One may become acquainted with a rapid succession of towns where the population is almost entirely Jewish, or half Jewish, or to a large extent Jewish, and also with others in which residence is practically prohibited to Jews, which, therefore, to speak in anti-Semitic jargon, are almost "clean of Jews." In Western Europe there is neither the one nor the other. It would be strange, indeed, if such ethnologically unique conditions offered to the observant spectator no disclosures which he seeks elsewhere in vain. In fact, I made in the cities free of Jews an observation which seems to me well worth imparting. The Jewish problem is nothing but a problem of relative over-population. The Jews are unendurable only where they are forced to compete with each other.

I made this observation in the following way. The Jewish proletarians of Poland impressed me as extremely repulsive. Their laziness, their filth, their craftiness, their perpetual readiness to cheat cannot but fill the Western European mind with very painful feelings and unedifying thoughts, in spite of all the teachings of history and all desire to be just. The evil wish arises that in some painless way the world might be rid of these disagreeable objects, or the equally inhuman thought that it would really be no great pity if this part of the Polish population did not exist at all. One is ashamed of such thoughts; nevertheless, that does not rid one's mind of them. Either we must renounce our ideas of cleanliness and honesty or find a great part of the Eastern Hebrews altogether unpleasant. Since the former is impossible, the latter will always be the case. Comparison with the still dirtier, still more immoral, still more neglected Polish proletariat does not drive away these thoughts. The Jew has, besides his filth and his craftiness in business, something else which calls to mind a nobility of civilisation, so that he cannot be confused with any chance "lazzaroni" or vagabond. He is not himself, but the caricature of a man of culture, and as such he produces an irritating effect.

In the cities free of Jews all this suddenly disappears. The Jews whom one has opportunity to meet there, well-educated merchants of the first guild, incorporated artisans, and descendants of the Jewish soldiers of Nicholas I., are of quite another

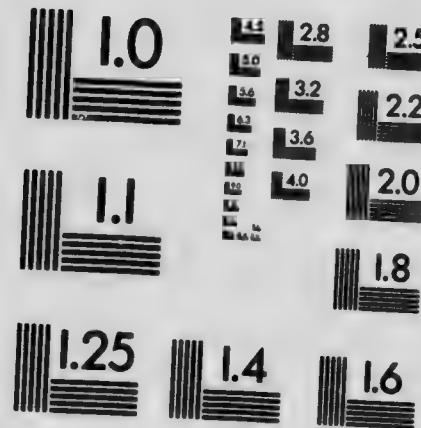
calibre from their Polish brothers. They are in no way to be distinguished from the Russians. One is continually prone to take the bearded Russian driver or merchant for a Jew and the intelligently keen Jew for a European. Then one learns that these Jewish lawyers, physicians, merchants, and artisans are treated by the Russians themselves as their equals in every respect indeed ; that the Jews enjoy a certain priority as being relatively more honest in their dealings. As a matter of fact, the Russians, when large numbers of them follow a single calling, as, say, in the great mercantile houses, or the ranks of trade, show all the qualities which, to our Western minds, are stamped as specifically Jewish. They are outrageously obtrusive, and unreliable to the point of open deception. The German Hansa towns strictly forbade their merchants, under penalty of immediate punishment, to give Russians goods on credit, to lend them money, or to borrow from them ("Book of Documents of Estonia-Livonia and Courland," Reval, 1852-64, Nos. 576-588, and "Documentary Account of the Origin of the German Hansa," Hamburg, 1830, ii., No. ix., p. 27 ; both cited in Lanin, "Russian Characteristics," German edition, i., 142). In making the smallest purchase one finds that there is no question of a mercantile norm ; that there is no fixed price, no keeping one's word, nothing that to us in the West has long seemed a matter of course. Just as in the Orient the Spanish Jews seem much more reliable and sterling than the rascally Greeks and Armenians, the

Jews, when thinly scattered, gain by comparison with the native Russians. Now the Russian Jew is no Spaniard with a proud Western past. He is altogether identical with the Polish Jew. His higher development cannot be accounted for by any ethnological difference. It is simply that under quite different economic conditions of existence he has become quite a different person. Dr. Polyakoff, of Moscow, is, in fact, another man from, say, his grandfather, Pollak, of Poland.

With these facts we now approach the real problem. The overcrowding of a calling engenders a competition in squalor among Christians as well as among Jews, Aryans, and Semites. The Jews, however, engage in overcrowded callings all over the world, obeying historic laws of adaptation even where other callings, not overcrowded, are not closed to them. Hence we have the disagreeable phenomenon of the handing over of certain vocations to the Jews, which means nothing else than the injury of these callings by the trickery of the competition of squalor. Where no fetters are placed on the economic life, the healthy organism, in time, overcomes these local inflammations, like, to use an expression taken from pathology, the influx of an abnormal number of cells of a certain sort to a place not intended for them. The crowding of the callings until self-support is impossible, the sinking of endurance in the overcrowded vocation, lead to a discharge of the superfluous elements, and finally the whole organism has overcome the



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crisis of assimilation by showing each particle where it is economically most valuable. In Germany the adjustment cannot be far away. The fact of the unheard-of economic growth during the past fifteen years, and the unusual increase of prosperity in all branches, show at least that Germany in the barely fifty years that it has given the Jews their freedom, has been in no way injured economically.

In Russia, also, the most expedient thing would evidently be simply to declare the removal of all restrictive laws, and to open to the Jews the interior of the country, as well as all occupations which they might wish to enter. The blessing to Russia would be immense, for the Jews, as thinking men and members of a race of ancient civilisation, would bring to the Russian nation just what it lacks, an intelligent middle class capable of culture. The percentage of Jews would not be at all too high for Russia, and would be without danger to the national character of its society. To about one hundred and thirty million Russians there are about five million Jews—that is, barely 4 per cent. The "Jew-free" cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg show approximately this proportion, without the Jews being perceptible there. (It must be admitted that one of the comforts of these cities is that they are not, like Warsaw, for instance, overwhelmed with greasy, "caftaned" Jews.) If it could be brought about, therefore, that the Jews could be scattered throughout the

whole kingdom, in the ratio of 4 per cent., it would be an incalculable gain for all parties, and mankind would be rid of a problem which threatens the condition of our ethics and humanity the more, the longer it exists.

Nevertheless, this is not to be thought of as an immediate possibility. The Russian Government is not in the least gifted with magnanimity and farsighted patience, though the contrary is true of the Russian people, who are entirely free from anti-Semitic prejudice. For this reason any enlargement of Jewish rights of residence and vocation is prevented by the pointing out of the infection which would then threaten all cities and all lucrative occupations. The Jewish question will long remain unsolved, for whom could the Russian officials bleed if not the tormented, worried, defenceless Jew?

CHAPTER XIX

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

An important interview—The Russian Bench and Bar—
Bribery and corruption—No public sense of equity—
The grand dukes—The chief cause of anti-Semitism—
A prayer for national defeat.

IT was perhaps not altogether accidental that one evening at a social gathering I was introduced to one of the foremost lawyers of St. Petersburg, whose biting sarcasm in discussing the events of the day immediately struck me, and aroused in me the desire to have a more serious talk with him. This was immediately granted me with that amiability which is never wanting in the intercourse of Russians with foreigners. Subsequently I learned that I might congratulate myself, for that particular lawyer was said to be not only one of the keenest minds in Russia, but one of the men best acquainted with his country. Moreover, he was so overwhelmed with work that even greater men were often obliged to wait by the hour in his ante-chamber before they were able to gain admission.

Indeed, the time fixed for our interview, near midnight, showed this to be the case. The conversation lasted until long after that hour, but I had no cause to regret the loss of several hours of sleep.

My host rose immediately and gave the inevitable order to bring tea and cigarettes. In a few minutes we were discussing the question which interested me most, as being the key to an understanding of all the other economic conditions of the country—namely, the question of the administration of justice in Russia.

“One circumstance makes it uncommonly difficult here to obtain justice,” began the lawyer. “I refer to the strained relations between the Bench and the Bar. Here the judge is more hostile to counsel than is the case in other countries, and often enough he is inclined to make them feel his power. This is less serious in civil suits—in which the judge, after all, merely has to do with the parties in the case—than in criminal cases, in which the judge represents the authority of the realm towards the accused and his advocate. In such cases the defendant may easily pay the penalty of the animosity which the judge feels towards his counsel.”

“What is the cause of this?”

“It has only too human a cause. It is not unheard of for a busy lawyer of reputation and good connections to earn thirty or forty thousand roubles a year, or more. Compare with that the wretched

salaries of the judges ; consider how costly living is here ; imagine the continuous over-burden of work of the Bench and the lack of public appreciation, and you will comprehend why our judges do not look at the world in general through rose-coloured glasses, and particularly at the prosperous, well-situated lawyer."

" You say lack of public appreciation. Is the position of judge not an honourable one ? "

" On the whole, no official in Russia is much respected. At the most he is feared. The most lucrative positions, however, are those of the administrative department and the police. In these branches are to be found the most rapid and brilliant careers, and therefore the sons of the noble families, in so far as they become officials, prefer them. The judge must work hard, and has small thanks."

" Does not this evil have a moral effect on the impartial administration of justice also ? "

" You mean, in plain speech, are not our judges to be bought ? Well, I must say, to the honour of these functionaries, that, relatively speaking, they constitute the most honourable class of all our officials, and that the majority of them are superior to bribery. To be frank, there is professional ambition enough ; and the effort to please superiors is almost a matter of course, since the independence of the judges, which had brought us extraordinary improvement in the candidates for the office, has been set aside again."

"Your judges are not, then, independent and irremovable?"

"What are you thinking of, under our present régime? We do not wish independent judges. Under Muravieff the pressure on the law courts is stronger than ever. Therefore, a monetary acknowledgment to the whole Senate is expected for each satisfactory judgment. We have such a case just now. Here you have a list of names of seven judges who were promoted out of turn by Muravieff, the Minister of Justice, on consideration of the kind support which they gave to the Ryaboushinskys, the Moscow millionaires, against the Bank of Kharkov, which was their debtor."

"Will you permit me to make a note of this list?"

"Certainly. I am not the only man who has it."

I noted down the names Davidov, Sokalski, Vishnevki, Laiming, Delyarov, Dublyavski, Podgurski. They were entered on a type-written sheet with the distinction and encouragement they had respectively received after a suit which brought a considerable profit to a Moscow millionaire firm.

"But you said," I objected, "that the judges are not open to bribery. Yet they performed an illegitimate service to millionaires."

"On the other hand, the judge has everything to fear when he is not compliant. Do you suppose that a comedy of justice like that of Kishineff can be played with independent judges? And yet there are always heroes to be found who fear no measures,

but administer justice according to their convictions. That is the astonishing thing, not the opposite, under a Muryvieff-Plehve régime."

"Was it better, then, formerly?"

"It was ; and would have become better still if our authorities had remained true to their mission of uplifting the altogether immoral people instead of corrupting them still further. In the system of Pobyedonoszhev, in which politics take the place of morality, no improvement is to be expected. You might as well expect fair play from the Spaniards of the Inquisition as here, where premiums are set upon all sorts of unwise actions, if only they seem to lead to the levelling of the masses, who are to be kept unthinking."

"You say the people are immoral?"

"They lack, above all thing. 'he sense of justice. No one here has rights. No one thinks he has. The natural state of things is that everything is forbidden. A privilege is a favour to which no one has any claim. To win a lawsuit is a matter of luck, not the result of a definite state of justice. One has no right to gain his cause simply because he is in the right. As a consequence of this it is neither discreditable nor disgraceful to be in the wrong. You win or lose according as the die falls. I will give an illustration from your own experience. You were to-day in the Hermitage. At a certain door, before which stood a servant, you asked whether people were permitted to enter. The answer was not 'yes' or 'no,' but 'Admittance is

commanded,' or 'Admittance is not commanded.' This spirit extends to the smallest things. That you keep your child with you and bring it up is not a matter of course, but you are permitted to have children and to bring them up—the latter, be it noted, only in so far as the police allow. If you should to-day suffer heavy loss by robbery or burglary, what should you do?"

"I should report the matter, of course."

"You say 'of course,' because it is a matter of course to you that a crime reported should become characterised as a crime, because in a certain way you feel the duty of personally upholding law and order. When the same thing happens to me, a Russian, I must first conquer my natural tendency, and then after a long struggle I, too, will report the matter, because—well, because I, as a lawyer and a representative of justice, am no longer a naïve Russian, but am infused with the usual ideas of justice. The normal Russian exceedingly seldom reports a case to the police, because he absolutely lacks the conviction of the necessity of justice. When he says of anybody that he is a clever rascal, his emphasis is laid on the word, clever, which expresses unlimited appreciation."

"That must make general intercourse exceedingly difficult."

"Certainly. To live in Russia means to use a thousand arts in keeping one's head above water. One never has a sure ground of law under one's feet. Property both public and private is perhaps

not less safe in Turkey than here. Have you heard of the great steel affair?"

"No."

"It is no wonder, for we do not make much ado about a little mischance of this sort. In that affair a capital of eight million roubles disappeared without a trace. It was invested in the coal and steel works. A grand duke, moreover, was interested in the enterprise, Grand Duke Peter Nikolaivitch. A license to mine iron ore on a certain territory for ninety-nine years had been obtained. A company was formed with a capital of ten million roubles. The Grand Duke took shares to the amount of a million roubles. Chludoff, an enormously wealthy man, put eight million roubles into the concern. French and Belgian experts were brought on special steamers; champagne flowed in streams. Of course the reports of the experts were glowing. But after three years there was of the eight million roubles, barely paid in, not a kopeck more to be found. It had all been stolen. Likewise there was no ore or coal on the territory, nor had there ever been. No one went to law about the affair, so little sensation did it cause."

"When did this affair take place?"

"Between 1898 and 1901."

"And can your press do nothing to better this general corruption?"

"We have a saying, 'It is hard to dig with a broken shovel.' Talented people like ourselves soon learned from abroad the little art of corrupt-

ing the press. With a fettered press like ours, this is less difficult here than in other countries, where a paper respecting public opinions might under some circumstances be unreservedly outspoken. But why should a press with Suworin and the *Novoye Vremya* at the head, surpassing absolutely all records of baseness—why should such a press run the risk of bankruptcy? Moreover, you must always keep one thing in mind: a press may exert tremendous power by publishing a man's worthlessness until he is made powerless in society; but since here notorious sharpers are readily accepted in the highest ranks of society, and even grand dukes do not escape the suspicion of corruption, it does no one any harm to be reported as having dexterously spirited away a few hundred thousands."

" You say even grand dukes?"

" Yes; they are not safe from suspicion. I can personally testify that not one of them takes a rouble himself. But the persons who live by obtaining concessions for joint-stock companies, &c., know how to represent that they need considerable sums for the purpose of influencing the highest persons, the ministers and grand dukes. Hence arises the reputation of theirs."

" And intelligent business men believe that?"

" Believe it? No one would understand the posse. Imagine a scene in my office. A business man comes to me with a case. He inquires my fee. I say five hundred roubles. He asks what my fee

will be. I say a few roubles for stamp duties, &c. Then he becomes more definite. He means the charges. 'There are none,' I answer. The man of business rises, disappointed. 'Ah! so you have no influential connections?' I will not say that this happens very often with me; for the men who come to me once know what I can do, and what I cannot do, and what my practice is. The case is, however, characteristic. Outside the legal profession, which still lives on the tradition of the time of its independence, every one is open to bribery; and every one reckons with the fact."

"And no one is angry at open injustice?"

"What is injustice? Despotism of the great. We have been used to that for thousands of years and accept it like the caprices of fortune. The peasant makes no distinction between a hailstorm which ruins his crop and an authority who oppresses or injures him. There is no way of resisting either; for when one curses God, He sends greater misfortune; and when one disputes with the authorities, one is absolutely lost. 'Submit, little one, this too shall pass;' that is the final conclusion of our wisdom. We are educated to it by inhuman despots and by an official service of thieves and debauchees. We lack, too, the sharply defined idea of ownership, in which the sense of justice, considered psychologically, has its root. You know that here the peasants own their own land only to an extremely small extent. The individual is merged and lost in the 'mir' (village community), where

the trustee, the 'zemski nachnainik,'¹ the village elder, and liquor rule. This 'obshtchina' (communism) is the strongest fortress of reaction. No ray of enlightenment penetrates it. At the most, misery and ever-returning hunger produce finally a condition of despair in which the peasant is capable of anything except an action which might advance him in civilisation. In the Census of 1898 villages were found where no one had any idea what paper is, and peasants who did not know the name of the Emperor. The 'mir,' moreover, is in its nature opposed to private ownership, and every discussion between the member of the village communism and the property-holder is artfully prevented by the compulsory scattering about of the peasants. The property-owners are at present for the most part Liberal. The régime, however, stands or falls with the isolation of the peasantry from Liberal influences. For the peasant is not unintelligent by nature, and, if he is not prevented, he learns very quickly."

"That is also, then, one of the causes of the ill-treatment of the Jews?"

"It is *the* cause. Do not suppose that the Holy Synod alone has power to influence legislation in favour of orthodoxy. Sectarians and Jews are demonstrably the only people who have a moral code of their own, and, therefore, know how to distinguish justice from injustice. They are also the only ones who criticise the actions of the authorities. They were, therefore, a dangerous

¹ Chief of the County Council.—*Translator.*

leaven in the community, which was otherwise all slipping off to sleep. Therefore it was a matter of self-preservation for the autocracy to isolate the Jews and make them harmless. Do not suppose that any anti-Semitic feeling is prevalent among us. The autocrats are trying artfully to implant it by means of such people as Plehve's intimate, Krushev, of the 'Bessarabetz.' But the effect does not go deep, thanks to the same circumstance which makes the progress of civilisation difficult ; the peasant cannot read, and does not in the least believe the priest. The massacres of Kishineff were directly commanded. Every man was killed by order of the Czar. No anti-Semitism exists among the people. Whatever anti-Semitism there is is sown by the Government for the purpose of isolating the peasants in order that 'the urchins may grow up stupid.'

"Ought not the Jews to take that into account and not meddle with politics ?"

"In the first place, I see no reason why the Jews should become accomplices of this formidable and soul-killing régime of ours. They will be oppressed all the same, whether meek or unruly. They will remain under special legislation, simply because no one can stop the flow of the official's unfailing spring of revenue—the ravaging of the Jews. Moreover, the Jews have never received so much sympathy from us as since they began to place themselves on the defensive and to make common cause with our Radicals. Now for the first time they belong to us, and yet really only those who actually fight with us

and for us. This matter, too, is misrepresented. Statistics, which show a percentage of eighty-five Jews in every hundred revolutionaries, are falsified, because Gentiles are allowed to slip through in order to injure the Radical—*i.e.*, the constitutional—movement by representing it as un-Russian and Jewish, and to mobilise foreign anti-Semitism against us. But the Jews ought to be grateful to Plehve, for, thanks to his machinations, all the intelligent opinion among us has become favourable to the Jews, and recognises the solidarity of its interest and those of the Jews. The struggle conduces much, however, to the assimilation of the Jews. They are our brothers ; they suffer with us and for us, even if also for themselves ; for our whole Jewish legislation for twenty years past has consisted only in the curtailing of the rights accorded them under Alexander II. Why should they not become revolutionaries ? But they are enemies of the Administration merely, not of the State ; therefore we find ourselves on the same footing."

I closed my interview, as in all cases, with the question, "What hope is there for the future ?" and received the same answer as in all other cases—

"Everything depends upon how this war ends. If God helps us and we lose the war, improvement is possible ; for then ruin, above all the chronic bankruptcy of the nation, can no longer be concealed. If a man should enter my room now—at this hour only respectable persons enter my room—and I should say to him, 'What do you hope and wish

in regard to the war ?' his answer would be, 'Defeat ; the only means of saving us.' If we calculate how many men are shot and exiled and how many families are ruined every year by Absolutism, the results of this Reign of Terror are as bad as those of war—nay, worse ! Only the final victory of Japan can make an end of this internal war, which has long been destroying us. Therefore, I say again, if God helps us we shall lose the war in the East. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by any official preparations. Every good Russian prays, 'God help us and permit us to be beaten.'"

When I left the brilliant lawyer it was, as I have said, long after midnight. It was "butter-week,"¹ and my sleigh had trouble in avoiding the drunken men who staggered across our way and the shrieking hussies who, with their companions with or without uniforms, carried on pastimes suitable to the season.

¹ " Butter-week" ("maslyanitza") is in Russia the week preceding Lent. Meat is forbidden, but milk, butter, and eggs are allowed as food. Like the Carnival, it is celebrated with popular amusements.—*Translator.*

CHAPTER XX

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE PRESS

A library of candid criticism—Striking uniformity of public opinion—The Czar's advisers—The need of plain speech—Editors and the Censor—The *Novoye Vremya*.

THE fine Imperial library in St. Petersburg, which I was permitted through the kindness of our legation to use, possesses a specialty in a particular class of works, the collection of so-called "Russika"—*i.e.*, everything that has been written in foreign languages about Russia. Polite attendants, speaking various languages, assist the visitor. One learns from them that it is the business of special agents abroad to report on publications which relate to Russia, and to send them in. So it happens that probably nowhere in the world is there such an accumulation of revolutionary literature as in this Imperial collection. For patriotic writings are for the most part in Russian, so that they may be appreciated and quickly rewarded. The semi-official literature in foreign languages is not to be compared in quantity or importance with

that which true patriots are forced to their sorrow to write in foreign languages. I looked through piles of this forbidden literature. The impression I received was desperately disheartening. There is nothing which has not been said about Russia. The severest and best-attested attacks on the régime, on persons, on conditions, stand there quietly, volume by volume, in the Imperial library, and have had exactly as much effect as whip-strokes on water. The Russian political writer who wishes to war upon the present system with the weapon of reckless criticism must lose all hope in face of this library. What more can be said than has already been said by Milyukov, by Lanin, by Leroy-Beaulieu? The voice of the prophets does not penetrate to the ears of the rulers, or, if it does, it is drowned by the whispers of parasites who know how to protect their own interests, or it finds no echo in the too weak or too hardened hearts of the rulers.

I had the same sensation when, in the course of my conversations with leading persons in the service of the State, and with members of the "Intelligence," I was more and more struck with the fact that in Russia there is an unusually strong public opinion, which in its criticisms far transcends anything that can be said in foreign papers about Russian conditions, and that this criticism makes no impression whatever upon the authorities. I was, of course, interested next in the problem as to how it could be possible without newspapers—the Russian press

is under the most barbarous censorship—to disseminate from St. Petersburg to Odessa with a truly uncanny rapidity an almost monotonously uniform idea of all the events and personalities of the day. I confess I have not yet solved the riddle. It is only a hypothesis of mine to suppose that there are three or four centres for the formation of opinion in Russia, one of which is undoubtedly to be found in the Ministry itself, and another, perhaps, in the Noblemen's Club, or in other clubs of the intelligent classes in Moscow, and that through the abundance of time which every Russian allows himself for recreation, every newly-coined saying or opinion is spread throughout the whole realm by letters or by word of mouth. I have heard from the lips of statesmen high in office literally the same words I have heard at the table of Leo Tolstoi, in Yasnaya Polyana, or in the study of the lawyer who gave me an interview. After I had come to terms with this fact of the absolute uniformity of public opinion, a fact not altogether gratifying to the collector of information, it was no longer possible to ignore the question as to how it is possible that such a unison of wishes and opinions meets only deaf ears in the highest circles, although it has already become a historic legend that Alexander II. was led into the war with Turkey against his will by public opinion. If public opinion at that time had so much power for evil, why does it not have power now, and power for good?

An annoying question sooner or later finds an answer—whether a correct one or not remains to be seen—no doubt because the mind does not rest until it has found something plausible wherewith to quiet itself. I finally explained the matter to myself in the following way. The husband is the last to hear of the shame that his consort brings upon him. People point at him, the servants giggle, even anonymous letters flutter on his table, and still he is unsuspecting, or, at the most, is disturbed without definitely knowing why. There is, except in the case of treachery, which is extremely rare, or the actual taking in the act, which is still rarer, only one possibility of enlightenment for him—namely, that a very intimate friend or a near relative play the part of the ruthless physician, and supply evidences which are irrefutable. An autocrat is hardly less interested in the credit of his system than a husband in the reputation of his wife. This system is apparently identical with his personality. He bears all the responsibility. He has reason for the most far-reaching suspicion of all who approach him, because he seldom sees any one who does not wish something of him. Who, then, has the courage, the credit, and the means to approach the Czar, and to tell him the truth concerning what goes on about him, and is done in his name? A near friend? That would have to be a foreign monarch. It is well known how carefully kings avoid seeming to advise, especially when the excessively proud Russian dynasty is in ques-

tion. What other monarch, moreover, must not consider his own interests, which cannot be identical with those of Russia ? The German Emperor, perhaps, would seem freest to advise. Unfortunately, however, the relations between William II. and Nicholas II. are none of the most intimate. Indeed, Nicholas openly shuns too frequent intercourse with Emperor William, and prefers when he is in Germany to play tennis with his brother-in-law of Hesse. There remains, then, only near relatives. They, indeed, are much in evidence, and they have the Czar entirely under their influence. They are public opinion for him ; and as long as they have no interest in placing themselves on the side of the opposition, so long, according to physico-psychological laws, will the voice of the real public opinion decrease in proportion to the square of the approach to the Czar ; and all anonymous or unauthorised enlightenments and memorials by patriots who willingly make themselves victims will make no more than a momentary impression. The public opinion which forced the Czar Alexander II. into the war with Turkey was the opinion of the belligerent grand dukes ; the public opinion which rules the present Czar and thereby prevents the counsels of the opposition from having a hearing is again that of the grand dukes, who move only in the narrowest Court circles and in those of the reactionary bureaucracy. The Czar knows this, but he cannot help himself. He has just now had a new experience of it, when

those about him made him firmly believe that the Japanese affair was well on the way towards a peaceful settlement, while at the same time, by dilatory tactics and constant preparations, they provoked the Japanese to declare war.

There is only one possible position for an intelligent ruler who seeks to secure veracious information. That is to institute a free press and an independent Parliament. To be sure, both press and Parliament may be led astray, and lead astray. It is unquestionably easier to find one's way in a few reports of the highest counsellors than in the chaotic confusion of voices of unmuzzled newspaper writers and members of Parliament, among whom, it cannot be denied, conscienceless demagogues find place only too quickly. But he who bears such heavy responsibility should not avoid difficulties; and there is absolutely no other means of gaining a hearing for the truth than by the free utterance of every criticism. Finally, one learns to read and to hear, and comes to distinguish between real arguments and those of demagogues. No one outside the country can form a conception of how the Russian press and the elements of parliamentary institutions are oppressed by the camorra of officials. The dissolution of the "zemstvo" of the province of Tver, which had the effrontery to entertain wishes for a constitution, and the suppression of newspapers which dare to utter unpleasant views, are the least evils with which the opinions of the

opposition are punished. Far worse is the persecution of persons who are under suspicion of exerting especial influence upon their fellows. They are surprised by night, and in the most fortunate cases are held in prison for months during investigations. In other cases, when the search shows that the smallest bit of forbidden literature was in the hands of the suspected man, his exile to a distant province or to Siberia is a matter of course. These things, however, are unfortunately only too well known. What is not so well known is the way editors are treated who presume to wish to edit a paper, or who draw upon themselves as editors the displeasure of the police. The head censor in St. Petersburg, chief of the highest bureau of the press, is a certain Zverev, a former Liberal professor in the University of Moscow. Renegades are always the worst. Since Zverev has been censor the restrictions of the Russian press have been severer than ever. I became acquainted with the former editor-in-chief of a great paper, who sketched for me the examination he underwent before permission was granted him to edit a paper under censorship. There are, I should explain, two sorts of papers in Russia. The first are those which appear ostensibly without censorship, at their own risk, and at the slightest slip are simply suppressed. It is easy to guess how ready people are to invest in such enterprises! Those of the second sort are papers under censorship, which are submitted to the censor

before they appear, and through his oversight receive a certain protection, not, to be sure, of a very far-reaching kind. This, however, is the only method by which any capital can be secured ; and without capital to-day the founding of a paper is an impossibility.

Ivan Mikhailitsh Galitzyn, then, wishes to start a paper, has taken all preparatory steps, has procured capital and valuable testimonials, and appears now before the mighty Zverev to request the final license.

Zverev is a snob and bows to a great name. Therefore he cannot immediately say no, for the candidate has taken care to obtain testimonials from the most prominent people. Therefore the following dialogue ensues :—

“Ivan Mikhailitsh, I know you and your family. You are a Russian noble, and as such are called upon to protect the interests of our Emperor and of the Church. There is also nothing to be said against your patrons. But you yourself, ever since your student days, have been under suspicion of harbouring Western ideas. The people you associate with also are not entirely above suspicion. I am informed that you associate with Jews.”

“Your Excellency knows that my paper is to stand for progress, which certainly is not forbidden, and if Jews are among my acquaintances, it would be unchristian to insult them by turning my back on them.”

“Yes, that is all very well. But I should like to

know whether you will oppose the impertinences of the Jews with the necessary vigour?"

"Your Excellency will perceive that a paper which stands for progress cannot attack the Jews without good reason. But, on the other hand, it cannot be philo-Semitic, for our mercantile class would not advertise in it, on account of their anti-Semitic feeling, and the paper could not continue."

"Will your paper support the absurd efforts which are being made towards the introduction of a constitution?"

"We will concern ourselves only with practical questions. The introduction of a constitution does not belong to these."

"But if one of your editors should make an attempt to enter upon the discussion of this question, would you permit it?"

"My editors know the programme and will not attempt any disloyalty to it. But should the case occur, it would be my duty to protect the integrity of the programme."

"Ivan Mikhailitsh, you are a clever man and know how to make evasive answers. I cannot refuse you a license. But I warn you! And beware of the Jews. That is the first duty of a Russian nobleman to-day."

This is a conversation which has certainly been carried on more than once in Zverev's office before the founding of a paper. In striking agreement with it is the scene which Struve reports in his

Osvobozhdenie, when, after the suppression of a paper, the editor presents himself because his license has been taken away unjustly.

Again, take the case of a Moscow paper which has published a poem delivered at the time of a public festival, but in which the author had afterwards made some changes. The paper—I do not remember its name—was suppressed. The publisher or the editor, who is likewise said to have been a Russian noble, went to St. Petersburg, and objected that, as his paper appeared under censorship, if any one was to blame it was the censor who had let this poem pass. Zverev, however, showed plainly that latter-day tendencies did not please him, and that he only wanted an excuse for taking measures against the paper. Of course such measures mean, under some circumstances, financial ruin; in any case, severe injury to all the contributors. Therefore suppression of the license is an unusually effective means of pressure to bring to bear against the convictions of editors. In this case pressure of such a monstrous kind was attempted as it is to be hoped stands alone in the chapter of censor tyranny. The editor was told in plain words, by Zverev, that he might permit it to be stated that the poem had been smuggled into the paper behind his back by the Jews, and that the Minister of the Interior would at once grant a license for the re-appearance of the paper. The editor, of course, refused the demand, and a new page was added to the book of Russian infamy. Zverev remained in office as a worthy assistant to his minister, Plehve.

The oppression of independent-minded organs is, however, not the only expedient of Russian policy in regard to the press. Its antithesis is not absent—official support of the revolutionary and provincial press. Russia rejoices in one journal which has not its equal in untruthfulness and diabolical baseness in the whole world—the *Novoye Vremya*. This Panslavic sheet, which is ready to eat all Germans and Jews alive, and which finds no lie too infamous, no invention too childish to serve up to its readers, if only their prejudices are tickled, is openly supported by the Russian Government. It therefore contains an incomparably greater amount of news than any other, has consequently the most subscribers, and can pay its contributors and correspondents the best, so that every one who wants to read a paper with plenty of news has to take this noble organ. I found it everywhere in Russian houses, and if I asked the master of the house his opinion of it the answer was everywhere the same: "Infamous, but indispensable."

Great care is, then, taken that in Russia, as elsewhere, emperors—and other people—do not hear the truth. The autocracy, or rather bureaucracy, surrounds itself with bulwarks which nothing can penetrate. It will need an earthquake to make a breach. This earthquake is, indeed, according to the common opinion of all thinking Russians, nearer than is generally supposed. It is the financial breaking-up of a system now held together only by foreign loans.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME REALITIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION (KISHINEFF)

Distinguished prisoners—The true story of the Kishineff massacres—The treatment of the counsel for the prisoners—An honour to the profession.

A T a social gathering, which I must not describe because I do not wish to make it recognisable, I had an unusual privilege. We were drinking tea and talking—politics, of course, for no one any longer talks of anything else in Russia—when the door opened and a tall and very stately couple entered. A general exclamation hailed the new arrivals. They were welcomed with striking heartiness, and invited to the table as people who had returned from a long journey. When introduced to them I, of course, did not recognise their names, and contented myself with admiring the handsome appearance and elegance of the gentleman as well as of the lady until I could ask my neighbour at table why these people were welcomed with such surprising warmth.

"He has just come out of prison," was the hastily whispered reply.

The communication had such an effect that I was unable to finish the meal. It is not a usual thing for a Western European to be among the guests of a family of high repute and there meet with people who have just been discharged from prison. Moreover, among us, culprits do not look like this uncommonly handsome pair. Finally, it is not customary with us to receive with such heartiness people who have just discarded prison shackles. I therefore asked for the name and crime of the new-comer. I was told, and at once I understood everything.

This courtly gentleman was a Russian noble and a prominent lawyer. At my request he related in German his prison experiences. He had, it seems, been arrested at night and immediately incarcerated. His wife had taken the children out of bed, because even the beds had to be searched for bed-hidden literature and the like. The pretext for this night visit of the police had been that the lawyer had been informed against as having given shelter to a political fugitive. For this reason search was made even in the cradle of the smallest child, in order to make sure that the criminal was not hidden there. The true ground, however, was that Mr. von X—, as a lawyer, defended political criminals and must be dealt with accordingly. Eleven days were spent in examining him. The search of the house revealed nothing; for only the most reckless have a

trace of forbidden literature in their houses, although Struve's *Osvobozhdenie*¹ is read almost everywhere. No other accusation could be brought against a man so highly honoured. He was also not altogether without means of defence in his large clientage. His case had caused a great sensation. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War had, however, caused the authorities to content themselves with treating him to the pleasures of a short residence in a police-hole, and they refrained for the time being from exiling or banishing him from the place of his practice—an experience which might easily enough happen after a much longer investigation to lawyers in noted or of lower rank.

After this little incident, noteworthy enough to a foreigner, I became much interested in the troubles of lawyers, and obtained the amplest information on the subject. I even incidentally made the acquaintance of one of the officially disciplined lawyers of Kishineff, but was unable to converse with him, as he spoke no language but Russian. He was a vigorous man, rather young, with heavy dark hair and beard, and of a distinctively Russian type. As the son of a priest, he ought to have had, according to the ideas of people of discretion, something better to do than to interfere with the programme of the Government. But Dr. Lokoloff, the lawyer in question, is a remarkable man. He believes it to be an advocate's duty to uphold justice; and he absolutely refused to admit that

¹ Liberation.

justice in Russia is a matter of politics. I managed to learn more about the proceedings against Dr. Lokoloff from a well-informed colleague of his, whose name, of course, I may not disclose. Since the simple recital of such a case is more instructive than whole volumes of generalisations, I will give it in detail as related to me. I may, however, remark that the case is by no means the worst I have heard of, as the Government takes much severer measures to terrorise lawyers and to prevent them from defending "politically inconvenient" persons. The case of Lokoloff, moreover, calls for more detailed treatment, because the massacre perpetrated at Kishineff, in the name of the Czar, has at last drawn public attention to the conditions in his dominions.

The participation of the Government organs in the "programme" of Kishineff was exposed by another lawyer, Dr. Paul N. von Pereverseff, who expiated his accusation with exile to Archangel, where he and his wife now live in a village, while his children are being sheltered by relatives. Pereverseff had gone to Kishineff after the disturbances, and had there made the acquaintance of Pronin, Krushevan, Stefanoff, and Baron Levendahl, at that time in command of the gendarmes at Kishineff. Since he came as counsel for the accused, and was a Russian nobleman above suspicion, he at once enjoyed the confidence of these honest men. Thus he learned that Pronin, the colleague of Krushevan and the protégé of Plehve, in his character of member of the Committee for Poor

Culprits, gave exact instructions to the prisoners how they should speak in the legal proceedings. Pereverseff soon became convinced that the chief culprit—namely, Plehve, who had planned to administer punishment on the Jews, and to present a new accusation against them to the Czar—would not appear at the bar. There would appear instead only the poor wretches who had been directed to plunder and kill the Jews by order of the Czar.

Dr. Lokoloff arrived at Kishineff in May, 1903, as advocate for the injured parties, and learned there from Pereverseff what the latter had already discovered. He then made a personal investigation extending over several months, in the course of which he discovered also that the "programme" of the police and of Baron Levendahl had been instigated by direct orders from higher authorities. He gave expression to this conviction in the course of the proceedings, and was, in consequence, imprisoned on an order telegraphed direct from the Minister of the Interior to Prince Krussoff, the Governor, on December 9, 1903.

On the day following the despatch of the telegram a letter from Plehve reached Prince Krussoff, in which the former desired that the proceedings of Lokoloff in Kishineff be immediately reported and his exile to the north decreed. Prince Krussoff himself visited Lokoloff in prison, and made him acquainted with Plehve's message, whereupon Lokoloff wrote a protocol in answer to four charges based upon data furnished by the gendarmes,

as follows (the accusation is given first and is followed by Lokoloff's answer) :—

" I. It is asserted that you have come to Kishineff in a professional capacity, with the ostensible purpose of affording legal assistance to the injured parties, but in reality to carry on, in conjunction with other persons whose activity in opposition to the Government is well known, a private investigation parallel with the legal one, to incite the Jews to make biased statements, serviceable to the purposes of the opposition, and to bring forward groundless complaints.

" *Answer.* Yes, I have carried on an investigation, and in so doing have only discharged my duty. It is not forbidden in our country to conduct investigation openly or secretly. My course of action was dictated solely by the interests of my clients and the inadequate official investigation. Very rich men took part in the disturbances ; but the official investigation recognised only *poor* ones as participators. The interests of the injured persons, however, demand that the *rich* culprits also be ~~l~~ ¹ to justice. The investigations made by me was no ~~s~~... The Governor, the State Attorney, the Court of Appeal, and the County Court knew of it ; and I received my information in regard to the disturbances from inhabitants of the city. In order to secure this information, I questioned many hundreds of people who had been witnesses of the disturbances. My offices were in special rooms, which were known to the police. The assertion that the testimony was biased and false is itself false.

" II. You have deliberately spread false assertions in order to discredit the local authorities in the eyes of the Government.

" *Answer.* I have never deliberately spread false assertions in order to discredit the local authorities in the eyes of the Government.

" III. You have made use of your official position as counsel to publish information concerning proceedings in closed sessions, including the deliberately false assertion that in the legal process the connivance of the authorities in the organisation of the disturbances, with the help of the authorities and of the troops, was proved.

"Answer. I have never said that the disturbances were organised by the Government. But from very exact statements of witnesses, I consider it proved that the disturbances were organised with the help of very many official persons, as, for instance, Baron Levendahl. [Here followed an exact statement of the details of the action of Levendahl, which space will not permit me to give.] The judge, during the investigation, Freynat, himself acknowledged to me that the leaders of the incendiaries were agents of Levendahl. I myself demanded the attendance of Judge Freynat as a witness to this. He was called but not until after all the lawyers had been excluded!

"The agents of Levendahl, who were imprisoned with the murderers, were set free in the course of a few days, as is testified to by witnesses.

"IV. You are in very intimate relations with persons who belong to the Radical opposition. These persons are Dr. Doroshavsky and Miss Nerntsheva.

"Answer. Relations are not forbidden. I made the acquaintance of Dr. Doroshavsky and Miss Nerntsheva only because they took part in the 'programme,' to the extent of saving many Jews. Miss Vera Nerntsheva is, moreover, the daughter of a respected proprietor."

Lokoloff wrote to the Governor from prison to the effect that the accusations were groundless, and that he was not guilty. On the receipt of this letter Prince Krussoff visited him in his cell and admitted that, in his judgment, Lokoloff was, in fact, wrongfully imprisoned. The imprisonment, however, had been in obedience to an order from the Minister of the Interior. The Prince showed Lokoloff a copy of a letter which he had sent to Plehve. This letter stated that, according to Prince Krussoff's interpretation of the law, the action of Lokoloff did not constitute a crime, and that therefore he could not order his banishment to the north, but that

Lokoloff was "fanatically convinced" that the "programme" had been organised with the connivance of the authorities, and that he had unconsciously imparted this conviction to those with whom he came in contact. Therefore his residence in Kishineff must be considered dangerous.

After some days Krussoff received a telegram from Plehve directing that Lokoloff be liberated and that he be expelled from Kishineff.

Plehve's order was communicated by the Governor to Lokoloff, who expressed his astonishment that he should be expelled from Kishineff, while Pronin, who, in Krussoff's own opinion, was one of the chief offenders, was allowed to remain. This order, he added, would not tend to a feeling of confidence in justice in Bessarabia.

As a matter of fact, the expulsion of Lokoloff was generally looked upon as fresh evidence of the complicity of the Government in the disturbances.

No one in Kishineff now knows anything more about the affair. Pereverseff, who had directly attacked the Government, was severely punished and banished; Lokoloff was expelled. "All quiet in Schepko Street."

Of course the members of the legal profession in Russia do not regard the matter with indifference. At a meeting of the Association of Lawyers' Assistants the sympathy of those present was extended to Lokoloff; and at the monthly banquet of the Literary Alliance at St. Petersburg, the members even went so far as to express its dis-

approbation of the action of the Government in the affair.

The Minister of Justice, Muravieff, however—the worthy colleague of Plehve—explained to a deputation of lawyers, which congratulated him on his jubilee in January last, that he was favourably disposed towards the profession, but that advocates would do well to *avoid "pleading politically," since it was very prejudicial, indeed dangerous, to the profession, which might easily suffer for its independence.* A word to the wise, &c.

Such are the joys of the legal profession in Russia, and such is the fate of those who speak in defence of the right. The people of other countries will appreciate the services to truth and justice which, in spite of all obstacles, the undaunted advocate performs.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STUDENT BODY IN RUSSIA

In favour of Japan—The lust for martyrdom—University autonomy—At present no studying in the universities—The cause of student radicalism—A ferment that cannot be put down.

NOT very long after the dismissal of the former Minister of Education, Sänger, I sought out a certain university professor who had been mentioned to me as being accurately informed about university affairs. Of course my visit to him had been carefully planned, for it is not possible in Russia for a person—least of all if he be an official—to express himself freely to strangers.

The information which I received from this authority on the general political and economic position of Russia agreed with the discussions I had heard on every side. Misery, despair, inevitable collapse, these were the words which were most noticeable in his description too, and it would be almost superfluous for one to reproduce the conversation unless certain additional details had been brought out which are particularly characteristic of

the intense ferment in which intellectual Russia is just at this time involved.

Just previously several students had been arrested. I asked about the cause of the arrest and the probable fate of the young folks. A demonstration in favour of the Japanese had been held by the students, and had been reported. This was the cause of the arrest. "As yet nothing can be said about the fate of the incautious young men," the professor answered.

"You say that the students held a demonstration for the Japanese? It is scarcely credible!"

"And yet it is true. All enlightened people, and accordingly the students, too, regard the Japanese as an unexpected ally in their fight against the existing conditions, and so sympathy for them is not concealed. And, besides, aversion to them as a nation does not exist."

"But it is the very brothers and fellow-countrymen of the students who must pay for it with their own blood, if the Japanese retain the upper hand!"

"That is partially true. But first of all, Poles, Jews, and Armenians have been sent to the seat of war, so that the Russian families do not as yet feel the war so keenly; and then the Russian is used to the idea that there must be bloody sacrifices for the cause of freedom. At any rate those who were arrested are much dearer to the other students than the troops who have gone to the front."

"But they challenged their fate!"

"That is a part of the fight against the régime,

They seek martyrdom, since they have become convinced that nothing can be attained by bare protests and petitions. Perhaps a trace of Asiatic fatalism, and a lower valuation of life than is given it in the West, play a part in their acts, but more powerful than all else probably their conviction that public opinion appreciates their sacrifices, and approves of their conduct."

"Then ambition is also an influence?"

"If you care to call it so. There is a little ambition in every martyrdom. But the strongest motive is that youthful self-sacrifice, and the belief that something can be attained for the cause by their offering themselves up—in short, fanaticism. In this way some of the most incredible things occur; for example, a student in prison emptied an oil lamp over his body, and set fire to it only in order to protest against Absolutism."

"I have heard this horrible story."

"Those who are now under arrest," the professor continued, "will probably most of them soon be let free, for I do not believe that the authorities have at present any desire to raise much of a storm. But as many of them as are Jews will in all probability be more severely punished, if only for statistical reasons."

"I understand."

"Oh, yes. You know that the police have their special code for the Jews, so as to prove that the discontent is entirely due to them. Plehve asserts that he has forty thousand political indictments,

80 per cent. of the indicted being Jews. That is made up to suit themselves, and has nothing to do with turbulence. On the other hand I dare say that quite often just for this statistical reason, and because the Jews are punished quite differently from the sons of distinguished families, the Jews are urged by their congeners not to expose themselves, but they, too, are of course infected by the general fanaticism of self-sacrifice."

"But from what do the special student disturbances about which we hear so much proceed? Are they not caused by troubles in the universities?"

"Only in the very rarest cases. It is occurrences of general politics which find a particularly lively echo among the students; the reforms which are demanded for the university by us, the professors, are even repudiated by the students, because they do not wish to let the causes of their discontent be removed."

"What is the nature of the reforms in question?"

"General Wannowski, former Minister of Education, was perhaps a man of limited capacity, who considered the university a barracks, the professors colonels and other officers, the students privates, and explained that the only thing lacking was non-commissioned officers to keep their respective squads in order. Still, he showed us the consideration of asking us eighteen questions which were to be answered by the faculties. Look here"—the professor pointed to a heavy bundle of printed matter—"here you have the results of the inquiry."

"And what is the substance of your wishes, to put it into a very few words?"

"One word is sufficient—'Autonomy.' We want independence in teaching—'Lehrfreiheit' as it is in Germany—Independent regulation of our own affairs, and liberation from the direction of another department which has neither interest in us nor understanding of us. This demand was unanimously expressed by all the universities; in Moscow only two professors in the whole faculty declared themselves for the prevalent system."

"Was anything accomplished by this inquiry?"

"To a slight extent. We obtained a university court, constituted of professors, and the permission to form scientific societies among the students."

"That is not so bad. And you say that the students are not in sympathy with that?"

"No; they are afraid that discontent may be lessened by these concessions, and they wish to be discontented until they have accomplished everything."

"What do you mean by 'everything'?"

"A constitution and freedom of the press. They do not even use the right to form scientific societies. *At present there is no studying done at our universities*; politics have swallowed up everything, and the Radical element has seized the leadership completely. They hope in a few months, by means of demonstrations, and heaven knows what fateful resources, to attain a constitution, and after that they say there will always be time enough for study."

At present study; too, would be treason against the cause of freedom. The universities are only political camps, awaiting the call to arms, and nothing more."

"But in this respect at least they must be glad of their independent university courts, which can at any rate punish their youthful misdeeds more leniently than the police?"

"No. In the first place it is only disciplinary matters over which our court has jurisdiction, and then, in the second place, you forget that the students do not at all want to be mildly treated, but to be sacrificed."

"Of course. It is hard to reckon with motives that one scarcely understands. But one thing is still unintelligible to me. It cannot exactly be said that Russia is a Radical country in the sense that the whole upper stratum is Radical. How is it that the student body, which comes principally from this upper stratum, is so laden with revolutionary tendencies?"

"I might answer you in a French phrase, although it is not particularly flattering to us: 'Le Russe est libéral jusqu'à trente ans et après—canaille.'¹ The Russian is absolutely *not* Conservative, not even the official. He can feign Conservatism while seeking office, but in his own house he remains a free-thinker, and youth, which has not yet learned to cringe and hedge, blushes at the two-facedness of

¹ "The Russian is Liberal until his thirtieth year—then he joins the rabble."

its parentage, and continually reveals the true attitude of the house. Then, with the exception of the high nobility, our whole landowner class is more than Liberal. Moreover, from two to three hundred Conservative students are to be found at each of the great universities, and they have formed a secret association for the protection of the *sacred régime*—and it is characteristic that the *Novoye Vremya* was allowed to print the call to form *this* secret society, although here in Russia all secret societies are illegal."

"And are not these Conservative students dangerous to their fellows?"

"Up to the present they have confined themselves to patriotic demonstrations. They might become dangerous if they once decided to go to lectures—not even then, to their fellow-students, but to the professors, who have greater doctrinal freedom, and who also make use of the right to express their opinions, of course within the limits of their special subjects. [Shortly after this interview a professor in Kharkov who had expressed sympathy for the Japanese was actually informed against by the Conservative students and dealt with by the authorities, a thing which led to great student demonstrations.] Moreover, there are special spies who keep watch over the professors and students, but, luckily, they are too illiterate to understand the import of what is said, and therefore can do little damage."

"Are the professors sufficiently in sympathy with

each other for the formation of a university *esprit de corps*?"

"Most certainly. The common suffering, and the fact that they are forbidden to take part in politics, draw them together. Where in other places rivalries and differences of opinion occasion dissensions, here there is to be found only one solid whole—oppression is the firm cement. And only in this way is it possible to make some resistance to the absolutism of the police. In *open* resistance we are quite weak, yes, even defenceless against the brutality of the régime, but in *passive* resistance we are almost unconquerable because of our close contact with each other."

"Ah! And so here there is brought to my attention one of those subterranean sources of public opinion in Russia which I have so long sought."

"Of course. The universities form at least one of the main channels."

"And you consider the next generation to be thoroughly impregnated with ideas of independence?"

"Thoroughly."

To the question with which I always parted from my authorities, that is, what he believed the immediate future contained for Russia, this professor, whose department I am not at liberty to indicate, but of whom I can say that he is particularly well informed, gave the following answer:—

"We are exhausted. The financing caused by

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the building of railways, tariff legislation, the tightening of the screws of taxation bring in money for a while, but no real power. We are on the brink of a crisis. I believe that the war will greatly accelerate this and force us to reduce our dividends.¹ Then, in my opinion, it cannot be long before a sort of national assembly is called. This is my belief and my hope. Conditions of excitement like the present ones at our universities cannot be long endured under any circumstances. In one way or another a change must take place, and we must hold fast to the hope of better things."

"¹ Den Coupon zu kürzen."

CHAPTER XXIII

BEFORE THE CATASTROPHE

(An Interview with a Russian Conservative,

A surprised interviewer—Unhesitating answers—A reign of terror imminent—A land full of “questions”—Poles and Jews sent to the front—Getting rid of revolutionaries—Evil days in store—Not ripe for a constitution.

“**I**F you wish to have a striking evidence of the worth of our Government, you need notice only one thing,” said an entirely unprejudiced Russian to me one day. “We have as many questions as we have classes of population. We have a Finnish question, a Polish, a Jewish, a Ruthenian, and a Caucasian question. We have, beside, a peasant question, a labour question, and a sectarian question, and, moreover, a student question also. Wherever you cut into the conglomerate of the Russian population, lengthwise or crosswise, everywhere you strike conflicts, combustibles and tension. Not a single one of the problems which may exist in organised States in general is solved, but every one has been made

burning and dangerous through unskilful, brutal, and even malicious handling."

The man who spoke in this way was not a Liberal, but a Conservative aristocrat in the State service. I had reserved him for the end of my journey of research. After I had had conversations with high officials in the Departments of Education and of Finance, with men like Prince Ukhтомsky, with bankers and with lawyers, and had heard always the same story of the instability of things, and the worthlessness of the régime, I turned to the friends who by their influence had smoothed the way for me everywhere, and said to them: "This cannot go on. I did not come to Russia merely to be shot, as it were, out of a pneumatic tube through a collection of Liberal and Radical malcontents. I do not wish to hear merely the opposition in Russia. You must gain access for me to some prominent Conservative also, one who stands on the basis of the present system, and who honestly and in good faith defends it. It need not be Suworin or any other man of questionable honour, for I myself can apply Stahl's theories to Russian conditions. It must be a sincere, reputable, and sensible man, with whom I can discuss the most widely different questions with or without an interpreter."

My request was readily granted. A scholar admired almost to the point of worship, in whose house I had been entertained, gave me a letter to the Conservative aristocrat whose words I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This letter

I forwarded to the honourable gentleman in question, asking for an interview, and by return mail I received a reply stating that he would expect me that same afternoon.

I must confess that I anticipated this interview with some qualms. It was towards the end of my visit. The results hitherto obtained had the disadvantage also that each succeeding interview only strengthened the impression gained from previous ones. Thus by degrees I had formed a very sharply defined image of Russian conditions ; such an image as is pictured in the mind of the thinking Russian. Was this clear and distinct image now to be dispelled by the lies of this Conservative critic, and was I to lose the chief result of my journey, a confidence in the trustworthiness of the data hitherto accumulated ?

I met the gentleman at his house at the appointed time, and learned at once that I had been especially recommended to him. I therefore entered without hesitation upon the matter in which I was interested.

"I do not wish," I began, "to go through Russia in blinkers. If your Excellency, as a Conservative, will have the goodness to refute what I have heard hitherto, and will give me more accurate information, I shall be under great obligation."

"What have you heard ?" asked the Count.

"That Russia is starving, while the papers report a surplus in the Treasury."

"That, unfortunately, is true."

"That your thinking people are in despair."

"Also true."

"That a revival of the Reign of Terror is to be feared."

"Equally true."

"That all Russia hopes the war will be lost, because only in that way can the present state of things be brought to an end."

"True again."

"That the present régime passes all bounds of depravity, and can be compared only with the Pretorian rule in the period of the decline of Rome."

"That understates the truth."

My face must have taken a very strange expression during this brisk play of question and answer, for the Count now took the initiative and said : "You are, I can see, surprised that I, as a Conservative and State official, should answer in this way ; but I hope you do not consider 'Conservative' and 'infamous' synonymous terms. If you do not, you will not expect me to approve the régime of Plehve. That is not a Conservative régime. It is the régime of hell, founded by a devil at the head of the most important department." (Here came the speech with which this chapter opens.) The Count then proceeded : "Do not suppose that Russia is of necessity smitten with such serious problems. These questions are nowhere simpler than with us. We have no national problems like those of Prussia, for in-

stance, or of Austria-Hungary, which are complicated by the fact that majorities and minorities are mixed together almost beyond separation. We have even in Poland hardly any national aspirations regarding which we could not come to a peaceable understanding. Our nationalities live almost entirely distinct, in compact bodies side by side; even the Finns are politically separate. It would be an easy thing to make them all contented under just maintenance of the supremacy of the Czar. But the priest-like intolerance of Pobyedonoszev has spread the idea in the world that all diversities of religion and speech must be smoothed out with a hot flat-iron, even at the risk of singeing heads. Since then, it is considered patriotic to repress men and convictions. For this business unclean creatures are to be found who make careers for themselves in this way; and their prototype is the tenfold renegade Plehve."

"Yet I cannot conceal my astonishment, your Excellency, that you, as a Conservative, have this opinion of the system of Pobyedonoszev."

"Why is that so illogical? Conservative thought is, above all, that of organic development. All violence is revolutionary in its essence, whether it serves reactionary or republican tendencies. The system of Pobyedonoszev is revolutionary and reactionary. In his fashion Plehve, however, is simply a monstrous bill of extortion against the Czar, as well as against the shackled nation."

"Your Excellency of course refers to the idea that

Plehve intimidates the Czar by threats of revolution?"

"That is not an idea simply ; it is a fact, of which we have very definite information. But what not every one knows is the fact that we have no one but Plehve to thank for this war, which may be a catastrophe. He had a finger in 'l the manœuvres of delay which provoked the Japanese to war, because he believed that he could no longer preserve himself in any other way than by diverting public attention from conditions in the interior, and by ridding himself of those who were dissatisfied with him into the bargain."

"How the latter?"

"You do not know? It is very simple. The first men who were sent to Asia were the Poles, the Jews, and the Armenians. Among our troops the Poles were five times as largely represented, and the Jews even more so, than they should have been according to their census number. And you must search to discover a Christian among the reserve surgeons. Why is this the case? To get rid of the most important elements of the malcontents for years, perhaps for ever. Of course the Poles, the Jews, and the Ruthenians have the most cause for discontent. Meanwhile there is peace at home."

"Not to a remarkable extent, I observe."

"Wait. The students, who are so incautious in airing their ideas, will come to know the East."

"Your Excellency, no Radical has spoken like this."

"I can well understand that. The honourable Radicals have much less cause to be dissatisfied with this rule of banditti, for it sends the water to their mills. But a Conservative like myself sees with horror that all the foundations of the Conservative order of things are undermined, and that we are approaching exactly the same convulsions that France experienced after the spontaneous downfall of her absolute monarchy."

"In what respect, then, does your Excellency distinguish yourself as a Conservative, from the so-called Liberals? Certainly not in criticism."

"I will explain. The Liberals are Girondists, with their ideas adopted from Cahier and Rousseau. Minister Turgot was a Conservative, who wished to save the monarchy by trying to make an end of the loose management of favourites. We Conservatives do not believe in a constitution or a Parliament as the only means of salvation. We Russians are anything but ripe for that. It is a question if any people on the Continent, untrained in English self-government, are ripe for it. We look to the Czar for salvation, and to the Czar alone."

"Prince Ukhtomsky says much the same thing. He does not speak of Liberal or Conservative, but only of an intelligent party in Russia, and he believes that an able minister could save the whole situation."

"I do not believe that for an instant. For, under the present circumstances, an able and

honest minister cannot remain at Court. There is only one salvation—a Czar who is so educated for his task of ruling that he is not the plaything of a circle of courtiers, like our present good Emperor."

"I have heard a saying of Pobyedonoszев, 'Autocracy is good; but it involves an autocrat.'"

"Certainly; even if it were not Pobyedonoszев's opinion. For brutality alone certainly will not do. We must have knowledge of the subject and strength of will."

"Then the future must look very black to your Excellency, if you await salvation from a new and better-trained Czar. At present there is not even a prospect of a successor to the throne." *

"It looks black enough. I have no hope at all. For what is hope to others is to me new ground for sorrow. We shall be defeated in Asia. We shall have a financial crash, *i.e.*, our long-existent bankruptcy can no longer be veiled by juggling with the Budget; and then we shall have a repetition of the old game of revolutions and constitutions. Some Western ideas on constitution-making will be imported, and will not work. There will be a reaction; and the hand of every man will be against every other. . . ."

"Then your Excellency is opposed to the freedom of the press?"

"God forbid! A Conservative régime is far from

* This was of course written before the birth of a son to the Czar.

being a police régime. We must have a public opinion and a respectable press; and a press without freedom cannot be respectable. A press which is under strict laws but not under police tyranny, and an honourable government can both be brought about more easily under an absolute monarchy than under parliamentary rule; but there will be no question of all this."

"I find hardly any essential difference between the ideas which your Excellency represents and those which I have now, for months, been hearing in Russia."

"You cannot wonder at that. If you should ask me whether the snow out-of-doors is white or green, I also, as a Conservative, can only answer that it is white. We are in a bad way; our peasantry is starving; our thinking class is in despair; our finances are ravaged. Yet I believe that far more evil days are before us; and I thank God that I am an old man, who has seen the worst."

So ended my interview with the Conservative, whom I had sought out for the correction of the Radical views I had heard. In the evening I had to make a report to my friends, who had awaited it in suspense. My information created an immense sensation. Something entirely different from the interview had been expected; and there was astonishment at hearing views as bitter as any one present could have formulated. Had he permitted me to publish the conversation with his name?

"The conversation, but not his name," I answered.

A general "Aha!" went up from all present.

"That is the way with our 'chinovniks,'" remarked some one; "in a *tête-à-tête* they are all Liberal; and as soon as they are on the retired list they are all Radical."

"I beg pardon; Count X. spoke with decision against a constitution, therefore he is not a Liberal."

"We must beg you," came in an almost unanimous chorus, "for heaven's sake do not adopt this view and represent it abroad. It would be the greatest misfortune that could happen to us, if the outer world should believe that we really are not ripe for a constitution. We do not need an English or a Belgian constitution, to be sure; but a free Parliament and a free press we do need. Otherwise there is no reliance to be placed upon any reform; and the farther from the centre the more Asiatic will be the rule of the satraps."

"My duty is to report and not to judge," said I, drily. "I owe it to my authority to reproduce his views as he gave them to me. The only thing that I can do is to add your criticism to my report."

They were satisfied with this offer; and in accordance therewith I have reproduced the interview.

CHAPTER XXIV

SECTARIANS AND SOCIALISTS

The everlasting icon—The significance of sects—No organised revolution possible—The growth of mysticism—Some extreme cults—Religion and free love—Jumpers and Doukhobors—Nihilism—“God help us so that we may be defeated.”

I WAS taken one day to see a young Russian nobleman who was making a special study of the nature of sects. We drove to the outermost skirts of Moscow, and stopped before a small palace. My companion, another young Boyar, spoke to the servants ; and after a few moments we were conducted up a broad marble staircase to the first floor, where a suite of rooms furnished in extremely modern style opened out before us. I remarked to my companion that after all there really are no boundaries between countries ; for this little palace with its very modern interior might just as well have been in Paris or London as here in Moscow. Instead of answering, the Boyar motioned towards the icon which hung in a corner. Modern furnishings, a book-case filled with the most modern

philosophical literature, and above it the orthodox icon—we were in Moscow, after all.

The master of the house came in and embraced and kissed his friend. I was introduced, and we shook hands. Cigarettes were lighted; and without further formalities the young host took some manuscripts from a shelf, and began to give me a private reading. My companion helped when the reader's vocabulary failed him. It is thus that I am in a position to give from my notes the following excerpts from a work which cannot be printed in Russia, because it deals with the forbidden subject of the character of sects in a fashion not entirely acceptable to the censor.

The significance of sects in the inner structure of Russian life is best shown by some figures which give approximately their membership. In the year 1860 about ten million "Rasolniks" (Nonconformists) were counted; in 1878, fourteen million; in 1897, twenty million; and to-day they number thirty million. These Nonconformists not only do not belong to the Orthodox Church, but stand in hostility to the State, which identifies itself with the Orthodox Church. The sects are constantly increasing in number; and there is no doubt whatever that they answer much better to the religious needs of the Russian people than the State Church, just as they already comprise what is morally the best part of the nation.

The sects interested me less in themselves, although every expression of the human instinct of

faith is of psychological interest, than in their bearing on the question as to how far they are united to form a revolutionary army which could disarm and overthrow the autocracy, and then take in hand the new order of things. I tried to inform myself on this point from my kind host's paper. I also asked about it directly. The answers I received do not allow one to expect a revolutionary organisation in the near future. According to them, deliverance cannot come from below. Absolutism no longer has the masses in hand, but it is at least able to prevent any general, all-inclusive organisation of the dissatisfied; and the thinking class in their opposition to the Government did not find the way to the people until the most recent times. Only within the last few years has it been reported that the peasantry is beginning to show symptoms of unusual fermentation, the authors of which are unknown. The Government does what it can. It has spent nine million roubles for the strengthening of the provincial mounted police. According to the accepted view the sects arose because Patriarch Nikon wished to have the sacred writings and books of ritual then in use, in which textual errors were to be found, replaced by texts carefully revised according to the originals. The clergy, however, clinging to the old routine, opposed this. When the great council of May 13, 1667, declared itself in favour of Nikon's proposed reform, the division became complete. From that time forward the opposition of the "Old Believers" ("Starovertzy") became the

heart of all popular movements against the Imperial power. My host represented a different shade of opinion. According to his idea, the sects arose with the introduction of Christianity, and they represent the opposition of the simple paganism of the people to the complicated casuistry of the Byzantine Church. Until the fourteenth century, he thinks, the Church tried to keep with the sectarians, and suffered the procession to go according to the old pagan usage, with the sun instead of against it. Since the fourteenth century, however, the Church has identified itself with the power of the State. From this time dates the hostility of the sects to the Government. Nevertheless, until the seventeenth century, local gods were tolerated as patron saints. But when Bishop Mascarius issued a list of the saints recognised by the State, the quarrel with sects, which clung to their own saints, was made eternal. Since that time the sectarians have not troubled themselves at all with the official religious literature. They print their own books in secret presses.

Sectarianism really represents, therefore, in the first place, the national opposition of the Russian to Byzantium ; next, the opposition to St. Petersburg, and especially to Peter the Great, who was, and is regarded as Antichrist. But side by side with these nationalistic religious sects, and far in advance of them, have grown up mystically rationalistic ones also. Some of these, going back to early Christian ideas, refuse to bear arms and to take oath in court, like the German Anabaptists, Nazarenes, and Baptists.

Others, again, oppose the Church on mere grounds of their own judgment, and lead a life regulated according to the teachings of pure reason. The "Old Believers," after long and terrible martyrdoms, in which their priests were burned or otherwise executed, and after a sort of recantation, finally came to an understanding with the State, and are at present in part tolerated.

The great majority of rationalistic-mystic sects, however, have remained hostile to the Government, and are persecuted on all sides by the State, although a great part of their members lead much more moral lives than the Orthodox Russians.

There are at present to be distinguished sects with priests ("Popovtzy"); and sects without priests ("Bezpopovtzy.") The first are the "Old Believers," who are especially well represented in the rich merchant class in Moscow, and are recognised by the State. They may be distinguished by their uncut beards, by their mode of crossing themselves, and by their great piety.

The sects without priests are, however, the most interesting. The most characteristic among them are the "Self-burners," or Danielites, the "Beguny," or Pilgrims, the "Khlysty," or Scourgers, the "Skoptzy," and "Skakuny," or Jumpers.¹ Their customs show what psychology knows already, namely, that religious emotion leads easily to sexual, and then both tend to revel in bloody ideas. One is led, indeed, to question whether the fascinating

¹ A kind of Shakers.—*Enc. Brit.*

effect of so many of the stories of saints must not be traced back to that psychological connection in the sub-consciousness. With the Danielites voluntary death by fire is considered meritorious. The "Beguny" are vagabonds, "without passport," an unheard-of thing according to Russian ideas, without name, without proper institutions. In this sect men and women live together promiscuously. They are supported by secret members of the sect, who live in towns, and who do not, like the regular "Beguny," expose themselves to the standing curse of Antichrist, *i.e.*, the State. The "Khlysty" have direct revelations from heaven in the state of ecstasy which they experience at their devotional meetings. They are flagellants—dance in rings until they are exhausted, and then sink all together in a general orgie. The "Skoptzy" castrate themselves in such circumstances. The "Skakuny," or Jumpers, dance in pairs in the woods with frightfully dislocated limbs until they sink down exhausted. All these sects are accused of child-murder. They are said to wish to send children unspotted to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is to be noted that all these data are unreliable, because no stranger is admitted to the secret devotions, while the imaginations of the denouncers has just as much tendency to revel in sexual and sanguinary ideas as that of the exalted devotees. The persecution of these sects by the Government is easy to understand. Spiritual epidemics must be fought against as much as physical disease.

The persecution of the rationalistic sects is quite unjustifiable. They do not deserve the name of sects at all ; for in other countries similar ones form simply free political, ethical, or philosophical societies. Certainly they can only benefit the communities in which they exist by their high ideal of integrity and strict morality. Count Leo Tolstoi has already made the banishment of the Doukhobors known to all the world as an infamous proceeding, and has thereby raised large contributions for their settlement in Canada. The "Shaloputy" and the "Malevents," for the most part Ruthenians, have a really ideal character, free from the narrowness and superstition of the Church ; without ritual ; industrious, helpful, peaceful, and kindly. They live together in a state of free love-marriages, without constraint of Church or State ; neither lie nor swear, and do good even to their enemies. The "Stundists," who are said to have originated from the German pastor, Bonekemper, in the Rohrbach colony, near Odessa, are similarly virtuous communists, who do not trouble themselves about the State, hold all property in common ; adjust all quarrels among themselves, and harm nobody. The formula of the report with which the gendarmes are accustomed to give notice of the discovery of a Stundist is characteristic : "I was passing the house of Farmer X. and his son, and saw them both reading in a book. I entered, and ascertained that this book is the Gospel. Farmer X. and his son are therefore Stundists, and as such are most respectfully reported to the autho-

rities." Russian nobles have been exiled to Siberia for the crime of reading the Gospel to their servants. A former officer of the Guards, Kassili Alexandrovitch Pashkov, who dedicated all his means to philanthropy, and held religious exercises, was expelled from St. Petersburg, and the movement named after him was suppressed.

Why is all this? The narrow-mindedness of Po-byedonoszev's system permits no falling away from the official Church. The Police State tolerates no suspicious—that is politically suspicious—morality. The thinking class in Russia quote with bitterness Aksakov's saying, "Be a rascal, but be correct in your politics." ("Budi rasvratyen, no budi blahonamyeren.") Debauchery is directly commended to young men of good family, because it prevents intense absorption in politics. The crime of the Stundists, Doukhobors and Malevents, consists in their wishing to be Christians in the Spirit of Christ, and in being disaffected towards that diabolical machine—the Russian State. For this they are persecuted in the name of Christ and of the State, but as the above-quoted figures show, without result. Sectarianism grows continuously. Thus Leo Tolstoi's religious anarchy is in a certain way comprehensible. Whoever looks about him sees good people who, without making any disturbance, simply turn away from the State as something unchristian and inhuman; and he may easily fall into the delusion that it will some time be possible to found the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth

through the spreading of these teachings. Their rise, however, is only too comprehensible in a State which has never pretended to represent the general welfare and justice—means by which even conscienceless conquerors and despots have spread civilisation.

All these sects are limited to the peasantry. The sectarianism of the cities is called Socialism. Here, too, one must use the word “sectarianism.” For even the little bands of organised labour split immediately, after the Russian fashion, into smaller groups ; and even the intelligent upper classes form just as many little circles, each with its own doctrine and its own organ. In spite of all efforts I did not succeed in getting approximately reliable figures for the strength of the separate Socialistic groups. The estimates varied from forty thousand to two hundred thousand, and are, therefore, entirely worthless. In regard to the nature of the groups, both in general and in particular, there is much more definite information.

After the assassination of the Czar Alexander II.—which no one in Russia will believe was committed without the help of those groups, who knew definitely that the Emperor intended to sign a bill of arrest—the small and entirely isolated group of perhaps a hundred and fifty desperadoes was simply exterminated, and several thousand people were exiled to Siberia. With that the so-called aggression of Nihilism came to an end. Malicious persons, however, think it ended with the deed which was most in the interest of the omnipotent police,

namely, the assassination of Alexander II. In any case, the police was not at all severe in getting rid of this definitely recognised band. At that time the doctrine of Marx was beginning to spread in Russia. This doctrine was looked upon by the authorities as an antidote for the terrorism of anarchy. The Marxists, whose organ is the *Iskra* (Ray, or Spark), are doctrinaires here as everywhere ; swear—at least so the Revisionists declare—by the theory that the poor are growing poorer ; and wish the peasants to abandon their land, and to become a wandering proletariat, according to the catechism of Marx. They were opposed by the late Mikhailovsky, who knew Russia better than the founders of the *Iskra*. To-day the Marxists are supposed to be suppressed. Besides these there is the league with the two Parisian organs, the *Revolutionary Russia*, a monthly printed in Russian, and the *Russian Tribune*, the real monitor of the Socialistic movement, and next to Struve's *Osvobozhdenie*, the best source of information upon Russian conditions. The leaguers are former followers of Lassalle. They are exceedingly troublesome to the police on account of their close organisation.

For a while the police cherished the hope of being able to seize the Labour movement for their own purposes. A certain Subatov invented a plan by which the police were to give financial support to the organisation of labour, and in exchange to require the political good conduct of the organisation. The industrial barons, however, at whose

expense this 'treaty of peace' was to be brought about, put themselves on the defensive. Gouyon in particular, a manufacturer of Moscow, who employs over five thousand persons, simply threatened to close his factory if the inspectors were not withdrawn. So fell Subatov, leaving only his name behind to designate those who still put in a good word for police-socialism. They are called "Subatovists." With this exception, no one has thought of an honest factory inspection or an effectual help for the workmen.

The Socialistic movement is seizing not only the working classes, but also the universities, almost all of which to-day embrace a Radicalism certainly related to Socialism. No sharp distinction can be made, indeed, between these two stages in the general dissatisfaction and fermentation. The police keeps its strictest guard upon the universities and ^{and} the thinking classes. In the province of Irkutsk there are at present no fewer than three thousand political exiles. How many are lashed to death with knouts in police prisons no man knows. The answer, however, is found in those unplanned outrages which are beginning to occur again, and to which a governor or a minister falls victim, now in one place, now in another. An outbreak of many of these is generally expected in the near future.¹

¹ These statements were already in print long before the murder of Plehve. It is certainly not improbable that ere the book appears there will be further instances of assassination.

There is still, however, a Conservative element in Russia. I asked a well-fed Russian tradesman, a representative "Kupetz" (small dealer) of Moscow, what he thought about the war and the conditions in the country. His answer was so characteristic, that I must give it: "It is not anybody's business to think, but to obey God and the Czar." The present order of things in Russia rests on this principle, and on the stupidity of the half-savage Cossacks. Therefore, no one must be deceived by the symptoms of bitter feeling. A revolution under organised leadership and with a definite object is impossible. At the most, single nationalities and the starving peasantry may rise up, to suffer a sanguinary overthrow. Deliverance is not yet within sight for these most unfortunate of all men. National bankruptcy, which no one doubts is imminent, will perhaps bring an improvement. Therefore, the Russians pray, desirous to hasten it, "God help us so that we may be defeated."

CHAPTER XXV

MOSCOW

I.

Lasting impressions of a beautiful city—"Little Mother Moscow"—A drive round the city—The Kremlin—The Basilius Cathedral—The Church of the Deliverance—The Russian Rome.

BLUE sky, golden cupolas, green towers, red houses, pealing bells above, sleigh-bells on the streets, praying muzhiks before images of the saints, beautiful women in costly furs—when I wish to reconstruct from my recollections the picture of Moscow these are the elements which at first mingle, charming and chaotic, like the colours in Caucasian gold-enamel. How beautiful a city this is! How often have I stood upon the tower of the Ivan Meliky and have looked down on this endless sea of shining cupolas and gay roofs crowded upon gently rising hills far into the blue haze of the distance. Never was the Russian love of home so intelligible to me as here in the heart of Russia, upon the battlements of the Kremlin high above the bank of the Moskya!

And involuntarily I wondered, as indeed would any one not a subject of the Imperator, who looked down from these very battlements after the subjugation of all the armies of the Russians, whether he himself had really subjugated them, or whether only he had been brought to a death-bringing ambush. Æsthetic, ethnological, historical and political suggestions swarm to the mind of the thoughtful observer in this place. What wonder that the Russian feels himself here on holy ground, and would prefer to put off his shoes when he treads it ?

The vernacular tongue has a kindly word for St. Petersburg, and a pet name for Moscow—"Little Mother Moscow," it is called, the real capital of Russiandom. And even the stranger must remark this difference of treatment. St. Petersburg astonishes, awes, frightens. Moscow ingratiates herself at first sight, and wins each day a firmer hold on our hearts. One thinks with a certain tenderness of one's stay in Moscow, and in spite of disbelief promises oneself another visit. But not really believing so. For unless business calls him there, he is not likely to make a second visit to Moscow in a lifetime. But one longs to pass many a pleasant day in this city, so curious and yet so homeiy with her kindly inhabitants. Why ? It would be hard to say in a few words. The city is in so strong a contrast to the artificial structure of St. Petersburg. There the hand of man is all in evidence—nothing is refreshing. A great prison

fortress of granite blocks surrounded by huts and barracks. Moscow is a product of nature, founded with enthusiasm by its dwellers in response to the open invitation of nature, and adorned with utmost devotion. Even the stranger feels this, even though there is nothing to which he is unaccustomed except the devotion and tenderness of a people to whom he is bound by not a single tie of common association. With what emotions one wanders through Rome, from Mount Pincio to the Vatican ; how one is carried on by the ocean of world-history upon the Capitoline ; among the excavations of the Forum, among the palace walls of the Palatine. What is to us, in contrast, the Kremlin, this sanctuary of half-Asiatic barbarians ? Yes, an exotic delicacy, nothing else ! One cannot free oneself from the charm of these places. Here a good-natured folk has created a jewel-box, gay and dazzlingly ornamented, careless of what the culture of the West has declared beautiful and holy ; hither gravitate all the national feelings of a hundred million people—and finally, all this is created to the harm of no one, to frighten no one, to oppress no one. Here the Czar is not the general-in-chief of so many million bayonets, but "Little Father Czar," who yields the countless holy images and chapels just the same devotion as his lowest muzhik. And here is the past—not only the brazen, threatening present—the past of a strange people, but a people of lovable individuals, who, besides, are brought nearer to us than many of our nearest neighbours by a literature of unparalleled

fidelity to life. One must grow to love this childlike, slow-blooded, and yet care-free people, with their irresistible heartiness. And he who has learned to love the Russians must love their Little Mother Moscow, in spite of, or just on account of, her quietness.

From St. Petersburg an express train brings us to Moscow in thirteen hours. It is always a night train, for the Russian likes to sleep in his comfortable berth. And so we arrive in Moscow in the morning, ready at once to assimilate the first impressions of the enormous city. Our expectancy is great, of course. Moscow ! the object of all that is most Russian ! It must differ, at first sight, from all we have as yet seen. But while the hotel omnibus rattles through the streets from the dépôt, but little that is peculiar is to be seen. An affable fellow-passenger explains to us that that is only the foreign business quarter. But now one after another the church cupolas appear, each one brighter and more varied than the other. At our "Ah !" in expression of our satisfaction, we are instructed that we had better be more sparing of that vowel-sound, or we might soon become hoarse. Moscow has no less than four hundred and fifty churches, and twenty cloisters in addition. So let us be sparing ! But the resolution is hard to keep. A long and mighty wall suddenly rises before us, with countless angles, towers, and turrets. The wall is white, the towers are green, and through the gate we see long streets and buildings in all possible colours, dark red

included. It is Kitay-Gorod, the inner city with the bazaars. Bokhara cannot appear more Asiatic. Now we feel already all that we are about to see. A giant modern hotel almost destroys for us the ensemble. Quickly get to your lodgings and then out again !

We are nicely located. From our windows we see the towers of the Kremlin, which rise above the nearest roofs. Let him who can endure it remain behind double windows ! After washing, and having some tea, we are at the door again, and quickly make a bargain with the izwoztschik who is to drive us over the pre-arranged tour of the city. Horse and sleigh are somewhat smaller than in St. Petersburg, but still very good. And so we are out in the sunshine, off into the snowy landscape, to gain a hurried general conception of the endless city.

For two hours our good little horse draws us glidingly over bridges and pikes, up and down hill, and when we return half-frozen to the hotel, we have seen scarce a fraction of the circumference ; but we have seen perhaps a thousand teams with shaggy muzhiks in wicker sleighs, and some more little country houses of wood, which might serve in the West for summer cottages, but which offer an inviting shelter even here in the icy winter. The whole of Moscow is a complex of official municipal buildings, which are crowded together into the narrowest space, of churches and palaces narrowly crowded about the Kremlin, and of immense suburbs which lie in rings about the inner town.

But these suburbs have a half country character ; broad, uneven streets, and low, villa-like houses with little gardens. Little Mother Moscow gives her children room. They do not have to crowd together in tenements, paying for rented flats ; and houses of more than one storey are quite the exception. Even in the shadow of the Kremlin a parterre for the shop and a single storey above it are sufficient. Indeed, it is only the hotels that stretch with three or four stories skyward. The impression is ever recurring that Moscow has no desire to be a city, and only quite unwillingly yields to the necessity of a crowded existence.

The Kremlin, which we did not lose sight of once on our whole trip, entices us strongly. It lies before us, so let us enter.

Yes, if it were as easily done as said ! We cross a broad square, across which lean little horses draw a horse-car, which is as high as the first storey of a house, and then we stand before buildings which allow us to go no farther. It is the Duma, the city hall, on the left, and the historical museum on the right, both dark red in colour ; on the latter the façade is built entirely of darkened stone, so that it gives the impression of the whole being incrusted. The style is to be met with frequently. It belongs to the sixteenth century, and is now being revived. The idea of using a coating of Russian enamel as an element of architectural style is a brilliant one. We reach a gate of the high wall surrounding the inner city of Kitay-Gorod. But before we pass the gate,

let us cast a glance at the peculiar doings in the little chapel, scarcely bigger than a room, which is built on its left side. It is the Iberian Chapel with the famed image of the Virgin, to which the Czar pays his devotions before he enters the Kremlin. The original with its genuine precious stones is now in the city, where for a fee it is brought to sick people. In the meantime a copy takes its place. At the time of the daily processions of the Virgin, the Governor-General, Prince Sergius, does not allow the Jews to remain on the streets. The Blessed Virgin may not see upon her way the traces of Jewish feet! Every one crosses himself before her. But the majority climb the few steps to her and cross themselves again, with deep swayings of the upper part of their body; but some, men as well as women, throw themselves full length upon the ground, and touch the earth with their foreheads. The candle trade flourishes; scarcely a soul enters who does not buy a candle and light it before some image. No difference of station can be recognised. The great lady, the high official, the dirty muzhik, all are the same in their worship. Their caps are continually removed, and the rather time-wasting Russian ceremony of making the sign of the cross is performed. But the really pious ones do not content themselves with worshipping before the gate. They do the same thing again when inside.

We reach, finally, the "Red Square," so called because of the red Kremlin wall, and the red group

of houses at the entrance. We notice again that astonishment does not exactly make one brilliant. An "Ah!" in unison is all that escapes our lips. I believe that then I shouted with enthusiasm, and I should have liked to have taken the people by the coat-lappels, who, used to the scene, were indifferently going their ways, and to say to them: "Look, you barbarians! Do you not know what you have here?" Vasili Blazhenny, the Basilius Cathedral! Many times as one may have seen the curious piece of architecture depicted and dissected, yet when one finally stands before it and allows the gay towers, with their green, red, blue, and yellow cupolas, to make their impression, one seems to have entered quite another world, which no longer has a single thing in common with our Western one. A sovereign glorying phantasy has here been formed and created, apparently without rule; nothing but the law of variety has made these wings, doors, and windings, and in the narrowest space has unfolded a richness which strikes us dumb, much as our feeling for style struggles against the reversal of all our national laws. One's whole architectural sense leans towards clear relationship of parts, towards rhythm and proportion; the artist of the Basilius Cathedral leans towards intricacy, lack of rhythm, disproportion. He is a colourist and only a colourist, in contrast to our renaissance artists, to whom colour seems almost an injury to the delicate line. And yet in all this gay confusion he has held fast to a fundamental feeling, which in all the varia-

tions keeps returning, as in a fugue—yes, just as in the wildest dream some guiding idea like a red thread follows through it all. This motive—I could not help always calling it to myself the Tschibuk-motive, after the winding pearl-set tubes of a Turkish pipe—is carried out with every possible Indian, Persian, and Roman ingredient, and still retains the characteristic Byzantine style. A person would show great prejudice in calling this building a madhouse, as many an artist has done. One must only be able to free himself for an hour from the dictatorship of the old taste in order to be able to comprehend the delight of Ivan the Terrible at sight of this architectural orgie. (He gave expression to this delight by having the eyes of the architect put out, in order that he might build no second masterpiece like it.) And then again it must be confessed that the task of uniting in narrow space thirteen chapels with thirteen towers could not well have been solved in any other way than in this apparently most untrammelled, fantastic one. If this proposition be accepted, the creator of Vasili Blazhenny can only be the object of wonder.

Now Vasili Blazhenny is typical of all Moscow, the Kremlin included. It is the spirit of curious variety, of rich phantasy, the spirit of the South and the East which rules here. The snow one feels to be almost out of place, so southern is the character of the city. The Kremlin, too, before which we now stand, is a “free-act” work of art, a piece of something like the San Marco quarter in

Venice, if one thinks of the sea as removed. For the Kremlin must not be thought of as a palace ; it is a whole part of a city, surrounded by a wall sixty-five feet high, a mile and a quarter long, enclosing an irregular pentagon. It lies on a rather steeply-rising hill on the bank of the Moskya, and commands the whole region round about. Its beauty is not to be enjoyed in the interior of the many churches, palaces, and barracks, although there is enough worth seeing there too. It only opens up from the balcony of the Ivan Veliki tower, or from the Bastae, where the colossal monument of Alexander stands. But the most beautiful view of the complex whole is from the distant bank of the Moskya, where the high wall with its countless towers and cupolas seems like the offspring of an Oriental dream-phantasy. It shines and lightens in all colours, looks into the air and speaks kindly greetings to all below ; one could simply sit and clap one's hands for joy. But to the Russian this little jewel-box is by no means a plaything. On the contrary he very respectfully bares his head and ceases not to cross himself. For "above Moscow is only the Kremlin, and above the Kremlin is only heaven." Within, however, the muzhik regains his childlikeness, and when he stands before the enormous cannons, especially before "the Czar of Cannon," an old bronze gun, he invariably climbs upon the pyramid of giant balls which stands before it, climbs aloft and gapes into the wide mouth of the gun. And under no circumstances does he

neglect to creep into the hole of the "Queen of the bells," which is in front of the Ivan Veliki, in which there is room for two hundred people.

We, who are not childlike muzhiks, may not allow ourselves such diversions; we must conscientiously see all the wonders of this greatest of all rarities, a thing which will occupy at least a day. We spare the reader our experiences. Even the treasure chamber with the coronation insignia and jewels big as one's fist cannot inveigle us into a description —all *that* could be seen in Berlin or Vienna.

Finally, the wonderful beauty of the colossal Church of the Deliverance must here be spoken of. The work is too unique in its nature to allow of being passed over in silence. The church is built apart, is visible afar, and forms the glorious completion of the Kremlin picture seen from the Moskya. In its mighty height, with its colossal gilded domes, of which the middle one measures thirty-three yards in diameter, it lightens like a promise of dawn the gay, romantic air of the Kremlin. Fifty-eight high reliefs in marble ornament the façade, sixty windows give bright light to the interior, coloured still more golden by the light of countless candles. The magnificence of the central nave—entirely of gold and marble—is simply overpowering, and the golden and silver garments of the patriarchs would be quite superfluous in giving us the strongest impression of the enormous riches of the Russian Church. Together with the Cathedral of Isaac, in St. Petersburg, this church is well calcu-

lated to compete with St. Peter's in Rome. But I believe that one should refrain from the comparison. The expression "Rome tatare" comes from Madame de Staël, and was, within certain bounds, approved by Moltke, who would call Moscow a Russian Rome. But I must with all due modesty demur. Too many undertones vibrate in our souls at the word "Rome" to allow us to consider any sort of comparison. But for a Russian? Who knows where the awe of Eternity touches him deeper, before St. Peter's, or before this Church of the Deliverance?

But no such a question may be put. Muzhik and kopeg, farmer and small merchant, have absolutely no understanding of Rome—no beauty impresses them; only the barbaric pomp with the costliness of the materials. But the cultured Russian feels just as we do, and will not seek the elements which make mighty the word "Rome" anywhere else on earth. And those that I spoke to in Moscow itself would have given a good deal of the popularity of their country for a breath of European atmosphere. Continuity between the time of Ivan the Terrible and the present does not exist for these nobles, lawyers, and journalists of Moscow. They endure with polite but painful resignation our delight in the grotesqueness of their Kremlin, their churches and cloisters. It does not flatter them in the least that they are curiosities for Western people like the Baschkirs and Tatars, for instance; and they will not hear of their being

condemned to continue a life in Russian style, apart from Europe. This extreme enthusiasm for the autochthonous, which is often enough only an antiquated product of chance, is after all a romantic reaction, and nothing else. It has long been proved that the Gothic which awakened such exclusive enthusiasm in the days of the Germanic Romance, is not Gothic at all, but French. And so Russia has no reason at all for considering her style, which is really Byzantine, all-sufficient. Byzantine, however, is the contrast to Europe, whose past has led by way of Rome and Wittenburg to the Paris of 1789. And so progressive Moscow seeks freedom from the Byzantine. While I was pretty deeply imbued with things Russian, it was suggested to me to see a play in the "Artists' Theatre," and then to say whether Moscow was really quite Russian and Asiatic. I followed this advice, and had no reason to regret it.

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CHAPTER XXVI

MOSCOW

II.

"Julius Cæsar" at the "Decadent Theatre"—The audience—Russian hospitality—The obsession of politics—Moscowism—The Tretjakow Gallery—Ryepin's portraits—Russians and Jews.

THEY were right in advising me to go to the theatre in order to correct my impression that Moscow was a thorough-going Russian city. A hotel, for instance, proves nothing at all concerning the character of a town. It betrays at most the year of its erection; for to-day, the world over, building is done in the recognised "modern style."¹ Even this or that elegant street indicates nothing. There the imitation of patterns seen elsewhere plays too great a part. But the theatre which is to survive must adapt itself to the ruling taste to such an extent that it can be considered really characteristic of it.

Now the "Artists' Theatre," or, as it is called

¹ Both these words refer to a modern independent art movement in Europe.

because of the "secessionistic"¹ arrangement, the "Decadent Theatre," of Moscow is really unique, and by the preferences of the theatre public one can very well recognise the quality and quantity of the intelligence of a city. With respect to picturesqueness of staging, it is distinctly the superior of the Meininger theatres; and as far as scenery and purity of style are concerned it can well compare with the most up-to-date stages. To be sure, inquiry should not be made into the distribution of the individual rôles; to some extent this is worse than mediocre.

I saw "Julius Cæsar" played where the conspirators seemed to feel it necessary to yell out their plans in the night with all their might. But in contrast to this the palace of the emperor was represented with a fidelity which could not have been exceeded in Rome itself; and the same with the Forum, and with the generals' tent at Philippi. The choruses were simply captivating in their execution.

But more interesting to me than the play was the audience. And the audience, composed entirely of the educated middle class, knew quite as well how to judge what was success and what failure in the performance, as any of the better audiences of a Vienna or a Berlin theatre. And the foyer, very appealingly decorated by the simplest artistic means with scenes from the history of the Russian drama and with many portraits of writers and

¹ Cf. note on previous page.

actors, was visited and enjoyed by the audience in the intermission. If I had not continually heard about me the sounds of a strange speech, and had not seen here and there a Russian student uniform, it never would have occurred to me that I was in the very heart of Russia, so far as culture was concerned.

It was the same, too, in the families with which I spent my evenings. If there was a difference, it was only their heartiness, so gratefully at variance with our habits of careful reserve towards strangers. But these hearty and hospitable people who at once lead us to the samovar are by no means backwoodsmen, but are most intimately in touch with all the advantages of the world; and they have uncommonly keen powers of observation. The visiting European who might think himself in a position to act among them would quickly become aware that the Russian writers, who astonish us by their deep psychological insight, have not picked up their art by the wayside. It is hidden in the most charming little formalities which in Moscow in particular simply charmed me. Nowhere the slightest cant, nowhere the slightest false display, nowhere the forced enthusiasm for culture which makes certain circles of our great cities so repulsive to us.

Naturalness is the pervading note in Moscow social life. But literary and art interests are a matter of course in a society which is scarcely paralleled by the English in its demand for reviews. To-day, of

course, every other interest is forced to the wall by politics. I have been present at gatherings in the best circles of people of culture at which even the young had scarcely any interest save in political questions. Even little declamations with which the individual guests distinguished themselves were spiced with political allusions, and were enjoyed by young and old just because of this spice.

Yet Moscowism has, in a sense, a bad reputation. It is held to be the embodiment of the Russian reaction against every attempt of a civilising nature which emanates from St. Petersburg. Of the lesser citizens, or the old-fashioned merchant at times, this may even to-day be true. The nobility in the Moscow Government, however, the university, and the members of the few professions such as medicine and the law, are much less circumspect and free-minded in their political criticism than their contemporaries in St. Petersburg, for instance. Such an opposition organ as the *Russkiy Vyedomosti* does not exist in St. Petersburg. There is also, to be sure, a sharp contrast between the intelligence of Moscow and that of official St. Petersburg ; but this contrast is anything but one between reaction and progress. It is worth while to examine it more closely.

The present Russian régime has preserved only the despotism of the enlightened despotism of St. Peter ; the enlightenment has vanished. The wisdom of the Government consists solely in the obstruction of popular education. The means to

this end is the police with their relentless crusade against any intelligence of a trend not quite orthodox in its attitude towards the State, and the ruling spirit of the old régime in the corruption of all the elements of the higher strata of society. Demoralisation is encouraged, so to say, by official circles. Just as among the peasants a man caught reading his Bible is held in suspicion, so in St. Petersburg a young man makes himself subject to the displeasure of the authorities if he does not take his part in the "diversions of youth." A lordly contempt for humanity is accordingly the prerequisite for every career in that northern Paris. The pursuit of fortune has never a conscience, least of all where it appears in military form. There *esprit de corps* and dignity of position displace to a degree of absolute hostility all morality. Elegantly and fashionably clothed, one is always ready to wager one's life, or rather to throw it into the balance for the most valueless stake. One is irreligious and anti-moral on principle, but of the strictest outward orthodoxy, and monarchical to the very marrow.

It is to this anti-moral (anti-democratic) superficial superciliousness¹ that Moscow forms a contrast in each and every particular. Here one is benevolent, democratic, hearty, and intentionally modest in appearance. Here, too, every one appears to be less struggling. The ukos, kupetz (merchant) is as rich as he can be; but he lingers in his little

¹ Übermenschentum—cf. philosophy of Nietzsche.

store with narrow entrances, and never has a thought of laying aside his kaftan, the ancestral overcoat, or his high boots, into which are stuffed the ends of his trousers. But it is not exactly this merchant whom I should like to cite as an example of my point ; for it is just he who has brought upon Moscow the reputation for being hostile to progress. But there is probably some connection between the resistance which the nobility of Moscow offers to St. Petersburg customs, and the obstinate self-sufficiency of the merchant with his old-fashioned views. Just as this kupetz does not allow himself to be dazzled by the elegant-looking clerk of the St. Petersburg merchant, but clings to his ancestral ways, so the Moscow nobleman is not dazzled by the *elegance* of the dressy St. Petersburg officer of the Guards. People dress elegantly in Moscow, too—yes, even in the Parisian style. But the contemptible inhumanity of the struggling official of St. Petersburg does not appeal to the Moscowite as progress in civilisation, but as a metropolitan degeneracy to be despised. And so among the bright people of Moscow patriarchal heartiness is preserved. It was not a matter of pure chance that Leo Tolstoi spent so many winters in Moscow society. In St. Petersburg he would not have stayed.

The most beautiful creation of this conscious devotion to Moscow is the donation of a simple merchant, the possession of which any city of the world might envy—the Tretjakow Gallery, the largest

and most valuable private collection that exists anywhere. A knowledge of it is absolutely indispensable to the historian of modern Russian painting. The Alexander Museum of St. Petersburg has isolated magnificent pieces of Ryepin, Aiwasowsky, and the most beautiful sculptures of Antokolski ; but it cannot be compared with the two thousand pieces of the Tretjakow Gallery. The founder gave, besides this invaluable collection, a building for it, and a fund from the interest of which, even after his death, the collection might be augmented. Admission, of course, is free to all ; even fees for coat-checks may not be taken from its visitors.

In this gallery one realises for the first time that Russian painting is about at a par with Russian literature, that it also has its Tolstoïs, Turgenyevs and Dostoyevskis. Above all there is Ilya Ryepin, with a whole collection of portraits and large genre pictures. I have tried to sketch some of those works of art elsewhere in a special chapter devoted to this greatest of Russian artists, and will not repeat myself here. Let me only mention the portraits of Leo Tolstoï, copies of which can now be found in the West. The poet is here depicted once behind the plough, and again barefoot in his garden, his hands in his belt, his head thoughtfully sunk upon his breast. It is the best picture of Tolstoï that exists. Once, while I was walking up and down in conversation with the poet in his room at Yasnaya Polyana, I had to bite my tongue in order to suppress the remark, " Now you look as if you had

been cut from the canvas of Ryepin." Ryepin may be compared as a portrait painter with the very foremost artists of all times. The strength of his characters is simply unequalled.

But the Russians appear to me particularly great in the field of realistic genre and of landscape painting, just as in their literature, which never leaves the firm ground of observation; and just for that reason it is perfectly unique in the catching of every little event, of every feeling and atmosphere peculiar to the landscape. Among the painters of the last quarter of the nineteenth century who already have worked under Ryepin's influence, there is no longer any insidiousness of colouring. Everything is seen clearly and strongly reproduced. No Düsseldorferie and no anecdote painting. Of course they do not shun a subject useful in itself, and they by no means avoid a slight political tendency. But they are no less artists because they disdain to beg of the fanatics of "art for art's sake," the right to the name of artists by an exclusion of all but purely neutral subjects. On the contrary, in the naïveté in which they show themselves in their art as human beings of their time they let it be known that the problem, "art for art's sake," is for them without any meaning, since with them it is an axiom that they desire to influence only through the medium of their art; and yet they judge every work of art first of all in accordance with its artistic qualities. Only they do not allow themselves by an apparently neutral, but in reality a reactionary,

doctrine to be hindered from the expression of their sympathy for everything liberal, free, and human.

There is, for instance, a picture there by Jaroschénko which bears the harmless title, "Everywhere is Life." It might, yes, it ought to hang in the gallery of the Parisian; for it is a work of Christian spirit. Convicts are feeding doves from the railway car which is carrying them into exile. As a painting it is excellent. The light falls full upon the cooing pigeons in the foreground, and upon the convicts pressing their faces against the iron bars of the window of the car. One sees through the window, and notices on the far side of the car another barred window at which a man is standing and looking out. The interior of the waggon is almost dark. The group of convicts in the foreground consists of a young man, evidently the guilty one, and his wife is following him into exile with their year-old child at her bosom. For the sake of the child, and to please him, they are feeding the doves. A bearded old man looks on pleased, and a dark-bearded younger man, too, whom one might sooner believe guilty of some slight misdeed. But upon the face of all these exiles lies so child-like a brightness, so evident a sympathetic pleasure in the joy of the child, that one rather doubts their guilt than the fact that they are still capable, good-natured human feelings. And yet this picture of Christian pity has not been bought for the Parisian. For it is well understood, in spite of its harmless title,

what its meaning is : "Everywhere is life" should read "Everywhere is pity, everywhere humanity, except among the police, in the State and in an autocracy." What guilt can these good people have committed—looking so kindly at a child that cooingly feeds the doves—that they should be torn from their native hearth and be sent to the icy deserts of Siberia ? The young father—perhaps he went among the people teaching that a farmer was a man as well as a policeman. (Pristav !) And one thinks with a shudder of the two thousand political convicts of the year before that were sent into the department of Irkutsk.

Such is the Russian genre. It is full of references, but is never a mere illustration of some tendency or other. The painter does not make the solution of his problem easy, and does not speculate on the co-operative comprehension of the observer, who is satisfied if he finds his thoughts indicated. No, such a Russian genre-picture is perfect in the characteristic of the heads, in perspective, in the distribution of light and atmosphere. The purely picturesque, to be sure, is more evident in the landscape. And in this the Russians do astonishing work. They have the eye of the child of nature for the peculiarities of the landscape—an eye which we in the West must train again. What West European writer could have been in a position to write nature-studies like Leo Tolstoi's "Cossacks," or like the "Hay Harvest" from "Anna Karenina"? And one might also ask what West European has so studied

the forest like Schischkin, the sea like Aiwasowsky ? the river and the wind like Levitan ? There is a picture by Schischkin in the Tretjakow Gallery, "Morning in the Pine Forest." A family of bears busies itself about an enormous fallen, splintered pine. Everything is alive ; the comical little brown fellows are quite as true to nature as the moss in the foreground and the veil of mist before the trees in the background.

Strange to say, Schischkin is stronger in his etchings than in his oil paintings, the colours of which are always a little too dry. But his etchings, which I could enjoy in their first prints, thanks to the goodness of the Senator Reutern, in St. Petersburg, are real treasures in sentiment and character. He is, if one may express it so, the psychologist of foliage painting. A tree on the dunes is a whole tragedy from the lives of the pine-trees.

Aiwasowsky, the virtuoso of the troubled sea, is more effective than the quiet Schischkin. His storms at sea with their transparent waves actually terrify the onlooker. The Black Sea has been the favourite object of his pictures. There all the furies seem to be let loose in order to frighten fisher and sailor. And these floods shine and shimmer ; they are as if covered with a transparent light. Levitan, again, has understood the charm of the calm surface of a small body of water as no one else. His brush is dipped in feeling. The beauty of his pictures cannot be reproduced in words. He seems to have a special sense for the shades of

the atmosphere. It is a pity that he died so young.

The collection of Vereschtschagin has now obtained a particularly enhanced value because of the awful death of the master. The Tretjakow Gallery has, with the exception of the Napoleonic pictures, which ornament the Alexander Museum, almost the whole life-work of the artist. His work has only recently been universally appreciated. The power of the versatile man was astonishing ; his philanthropic turn of mind, and his epigrammatic spirit give spice to his pictures ; but of him, first of all, perhaps, it might be said that he used his art for purposes foreign to it, in spite of all artistic treatment. For it was seldom the artistic problem that charmed him. Only his Oriental colour-studies are to a certain extent free from ulterior purposes.

It is difficult to choose from this abundance of good masters, and particularly to name those whom one should know above the others. Pictures cannot easily be made so accessible as books ; and the content of a picture does not permit of being told at all. And so I content myself with mentioning again the names of Ryepin, Schischkin, Levitan, and Aiwasowsky, and then those of the portrait-painter, Kramskoi ; the landscape-painter, Gay ; and the master of genre-painting, Makowski. And to any one whose path ever leads him to Moscow a visit to the Tretjakow Gallery is most urgently recommended. A people which produces such artists in every field as the Russian has not only the

right to the strongest self-consciousness, and to the general sympathy of people of culture, but above all it has the right to be respected by its rulers, and not to be handled like a horde of slaves.

But, in spite of it all, light has not dawned upon those in power. You may resolve as often as you will in Russia not to bother, for the space of a day, with the everlasting police, but, in spite of all, you will be continually coming into contact with them. Our path from the Tretjakow Gallery to the hotel leads past a long, barrack-like building. We ask our companion its object. He at once tells us something of interest. First, the giant building is the manège, the drill-room for the soldiers in bad weather. Its arched roof lies upon the walls without any interior support. The weight of the roof is so great that already the walls, in many places, have sunk, and have had to be reinforced. Architects had suggested alterations, which, however, would have cost countless thousands. Such an expenditure could not be tolerated; and in the meantime the evil has increased. Already they were about to take a costly bite from the sour apple, when a petty peasant appeared and promised for a hundred roubles to arrange matters in a single night. He simply bored a hole into the top of the leaden roof, through which the air could circulate, and immediately the roof lay like a feather upon the walls without endangering them any longer by its weight. Such is the story of the Moskawan. Whether or not it is true, or is held to be so by people who know

about such things, I do not venture to judge. But it seemed to me interesting enough to be told. But what interested me still more was the subsidiary use to which the building is put. It is near the university. Now if a student disorder arises they manage to surround the students by Cossacks, and drive them into this manège, where they are held behind lock and key, by thousands, until the worshipful officials have sought out those which may most to their purpose be called revolutionists. Chance wills that generally the Jews are held, since Herr von Plehve needs statistical proof for his theory of a purely Jewish opposition.

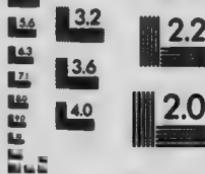
His accusations may have served him among those above him, but not among those below him. I found that in Moscow itself dealings between the intelligent Christians and the few Jews who are allowed upon the street to be most hearty. The political bitterness, the desperate fight against the régime unites them all—after the Russian custom they exchange, embrace, and kiss at every meeting Jew or Christian, provided they only be friends. It was for me, a Westerner, an interesting and mortifying sight to see how young Russian nobles, with world-famous names, kissed on the mouth and cheek in welcome and in farewell to their Jewish friends. With this impression I took my departure from Moscow. Terrible as the political pressure may be, the people have preserved one thing in this prison—their humanity. And thus they will one day attain happiness, just as they are in many

things already happier than we, because they have remained human. For a well-known authoress, who asked me to write a few words in her album, I wrote the words which I shall here repeat, because they contain the sum of my Russian impressions, particularly after the pleasing days in Moscow: "Russia is a sack; but it is inhabited by human beings. The West is free, but it knows almost nobody but business men. I often almost believe that we ought to envy them. . . ."



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CHAPTER XXVII

A VISIT TO TOLSTOI

I.

En route for Yasnaya Polyana—A Cossack officer—A first sight of Tolstoi—Disillusionment impossible—Tolstoi's dress—A physical and intellectual giant.

FROM Moscow an accommodation train goes in one night to Tula, capital of the Government of the same name. The infallible Baedeker advises the traveller to leave the train here, because it is hard to get a carriage at the next station, Kozlovka, though Kozlovka is nearer to Yasnaya Polyana, the estate of the poet, than Tula is. I follow my Baedeker blindly, because I have always had to repent when I departed from his advice. The German Baedeker deserves the highest credit for taking the trouble to give this information to the few travellers that make the pilgrimage to Leo Tolstoi. For it is not to be supposed that Tolstoi is overrun. His family guard his retirement, and do not grant admittance to every one. I was, in fact, the only stranger who found his way ther

during the entire week. It was, indeed, a very special introduction which opened the gates to me.

The train reaches Tula a ^{ight} in the morning. Thoughtful friends had given me a card in Russian to the stationmaster to help me to find a driver who knew the way. The stationmaster could not, however, decipher the card, and did not understand my French. A colonel of the Cossacks then helped me out. He had already been talking with the official, and now asked me if I could not speak German a little. When I assented, he immediately played the interpreter. In a few minutes a muzhik was found who, with his small sleigh and shaggy, big-boned pony, had made the journey many times. The amiable Cossack then accepted an invitation to breakfast in the clean station, and we chatted for a while over our tea. He was a tall, fair-haired man, with kindly blue eyes, and the short Slavonic nose. His conversation, however, emphatically contradicted his appearance. He was on his way to the Ural, where he was to meet his regiment, and talked about the bayonets of his Cossacks being bent because the men spit the "Kakamakis" (Japanese), and throw them over their shoulders. He was delighted that I was a German; "the Germans are very good fellows towards the Russians at present," said he. "Only the English are a bad lot—'Jew Englishmen!'" Leo Tolstoi, he said, was a man of great genius; but it was a pity that he was an atheist. I interrupted him, laughing.

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"I don't wish to be personal, Colonel ; but Le Tolstoï is a much better Christian than you."

"How's that ?"

I explained to him that Tolstoï wishes to re-establish the primitive Christianity, and is the enemy only of the Church and of the priests. The good fellow was immediately satisfied. If it were nothing worse than that—no Russian could endure the priests. They were all rascals. The missionaries in China had turned all their girls' schools into harems. Only the dissenting priests led a moral life.

It was the talk of a big, thoroughly lovable child in whom even the thirst for fighting was not unbecoming. Who knows whether the bullets of the "Kakamakis" have not already found him out. I spoke later to the good Tolstoï of this conversation. He also is persuaded that only right teaching is needed to turn these essentially good hearted people from the business of murder. A present war is merely a hunting adventure for them. They form no conception of the sufferings of the defeated.

Deeply buried in furs and robes, we glided at last over the glittering snow. The city of Tula, which would have been interesting at another time on account of its metal industry, was a matter of indifference at the moment. We passed it on the left, and struck at once into the road to Yasnay Polyan. The distance before us was almost fifteen versts (ten miles) ; our pony had therefore to make

good time if it was to bring us over all the hills, covered with soft snow, to our destination before noon. A Russian horse, however, can stand a good deal ; so I did not need to interrupt by inopportune consideration for animals the thoughts which surged through my brain more and more as we came near the end of the journey. A meeting with Tolstoï is such an incomparable privilege for me—will Fate permit me thoroughly to enjoy the moments ? And—if he is not the man I expect to find, if one of the great again unmasks before me as a poseur, who appears great and admirable only at a distance—how many illusions have I still to lose ? May not his apostleship be merely a self-suggested idea, obstinately clung to ? Is not his tardy religious bent, perhaps, mere hypochondria, fear of the next world, preparation for death ? A look into his eyes must show me. I must learn from the sound of his voice whether my inner ear deceives me when I hear the ring of sincerity in the primeval force of his diction. I know I cannot deceive myself. If the conception I had formed of him is corrected even in the least point by the reality, that is the end of my secret worship.

We turned in at last between two stone pillars at the park of Yasnaya Polyana. Below, beside the frozen pond, we saw a youthful figure advancing with the light step of an officer, surrounded by a pack of baying and leaping dogs. Yet, if my eyes did not deceive me, a grey beard flowed over the breast of this slender, boyish figure. He stopped,

shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked towards our sleigh. Then he turned back. It was he !

We had hardly reached the house and had been unwrapped from our furs and goloshes by the servants, when the door of the low vestibule opened, and there, in muzhik smock and fur, high boots and tall fur cap, as we knew him from a thousand pictures, Leo Tolstoi stood before us, and held out a friendly hand.

While he, motioning away the servants, pulled off his knee-high felt shoes, I had opportunity of looking at him. That is to say, my eyes at first were held by the head alone, with its softly curling grey hair which flows, parted, to the neck. Thick, bushy grey brows shade the deep-set eyes, and sharply define an angular, self-willed forehead. The nose is strong, slender above, broad and finely modelled in the nostrils. The long grey moustache completely covers the mobile mouth. A waving white beard, parted in the middle, flows from the hoary cheeks to the shoulders. The head is not broad—rather, it might be called narrow—wholly unslavonic, and is well poised. The broad, strongly built shoulders have a military erectness. The powerful body is set on slender hips. A narrow foot is hidden in the high Russian boot, and moves elastically. The step and carriage are youthful. An irony of fate will have it that the bitterest foe of militarism betrays in his whole appearance the former officer. The man in the peasant's dress is in every movement the grand seigneur.

We were still standing in the vestibule, which serves also as a cloak-room. The Count thrust both hands in his belt—well-shaped, powerful hands—and asked in faultless German my plan for the day. I felt the gentle eyes on my face as he spoke. The look is beaming and kindly. One is not pierced, only illuminated. Yet one feels distinctly that nothing is hidden from those quiet, kindly eyes. I answered that I should return to Moscow at midnight, and until then would under no consideration disturb him in his work. He told me, thereupon, to send back my sleigh, since he would have us driven at night to the station in his own. He would have no refusal to our eating breakfast before we withdrew to the room assigned us. The Countess, he said, was in Moscow at the time, but the youngest daughter would soon return from the village school, where she taught. She would entertain us until luncheon. I should say here that my wife accompanied me on this wintry journey, as on the whole journey of investigation. Tolstoi himself would keep to his usual programme; would look over his mail, write a promised article, rest a little in the afternoon, then ride; and from dinner, that is, from six o'clock until midnight, would be at my disposal. Then he led us to a large room on the first floor. Here stood a long table, which remains spread all day. Tea and eggs were brought. Before withdrawing, however, the Count sat with us a while, asked with the tact of a man of the world about personal matters—the

number of our children, and how they were cared for in our absence, and of the friends in Moscow who had introduced us to him ; all in a low musical voice, which banished all embarrassment. Then he rose with a slight bow and walked to his room. At the door, however, he turned and came back to ask whether we brought any news of the war. It was just in the pause after the first catastrophe at Port Arthur. We were obliged therefore, to say no. Then the servant appeared and led us back to the ground-floor, where we were shown into two connecting rooms. We had time to record our first impressions.

The worst was over. There was no fear of disillusion. That was gone like a cloud of smoke. The infinite kindness of his eyes, the gentleness of his hand-shake, the beauty of the silvery head exert a fascination. There can be no doubt of his complete sincerity. The mind is filled with an entirely new feeling, that of astonishment at the unpretentious peacefulness of this fighter, who, from the stern seriousness of his latest writings, and from his current portraits, might be taken for a gloomy brooding man. Whatever Titanic thoughts may work in this head, which looks like one of Michael Angelo's, all that is visible is a glow of serene and holy peace, which gently relaxes the tension of our own souls also. The ever-disturbing thought that we might find in the Count a recluse and an eccentric person—if one may use such profane expressions in connection with this illustrious man—a fanatic

on the subject of woollen underclothing, and a return to nature in foods, was set at rest from the first moment we saw the convenient dress of the muzhik. The peasant dress is simply the one that has proved best for his intercourse with the country people. Moreover, there is a noticeable difference between the well-cut and well-fitting coat of Tolstoi, and that of the ragged peasant. I must confess, the setting at rest of even this little misgiving was of value to me. For, as people are in this world, they will not take even a saint seriously if he wraps himself in external eccentricities—if he has not good taste. Leo Tolstoi decidedly has good taste. Only, he is great enough and strong enough not to submit to the tyranny of fashion. I should like, however, to see the man who felt the least suggestion of worldly superiority in talking with him. Truly the Count is not the man whom any fop, strong in the consciousness of his English tailor, would presume to patronise. Perhaps unconsciously to himself, and certainly against his will, it is unmistakably to be seen in him that he once had the idea of being *comme il faut*, as he tells in his "Childhood and Youth." However insignificant this circumstance may be for the world-wide fame of Leo Tolstoi, it must be mentioned, simply because the legend of the muzhik's smock may too easily create an entirely false impression of the personality of the poet. In spite of all the kindly simplicity of his bearing, no one can for a moment escape the impression that here speaks a distinguished man in every sense of the term,

The rooms allotted to us were parts of his large library. On a shelf I found the carefully kept catalogue of the fourteen cases, with each book on a separate slip. A glance through one of the glass doors showed me English, French, German, and Russian books ; my eye even fell on a Danish grammar. There stood side by side a work on Leonardo da Vinci, Bjornsen's "Uber unsere Kraft," Marcel Prevost's "Vierges Fortes," Jules Verne's "Journey to the Centre of the Earth," Spinoza, Renan, book of travel by Vambery, a book of entomology, Buffon—the most different sorts of books, and obviously much used. The Count is able to accomplish his day's work only by a careful division of the day, not to say by a military exactness and thoroughness, perhaps even to the extent of pedantry, in all his doings. Later, in speaking with me he used the familiar phrase, "Genius is eternal patience." He has this patience. It is well-known how he works that he lets his first conception be copied on the typewriter, then corrected, then copied again, and so on until the work satisfies him. On the day of my visit this man of seventy-five took an early morning walk of an hour and a half, looked over his large mail, wrote an English article upon the war, rode two full hours in the afternoon with the thermometer at six degrees of freezing, worked again, and remained in almost uninterrupted conversation with me from six o'clock until midnight. He spoke German most of the time, rarely French. At the end of the exceedingly intense conversation

he was just as youthfully elastic as at the beginning ; indeed, in the late night hours his eyes first began to glow with a light of inspiration, which no one who has once seen it can ever forget. In addition to the great thoroughness of all his action and the strict division of the day, a vital energy which must be called truly phenomenal is also most essentially characteristic of his personality. Leo Tolstoi is a giant in psychical and intellectual strength, as he must once have been in physical strength also. It is not purely accidental that the two heroes in whom he has pictured himself most unmistakably—Peter in "War and Peace," and Levin in "Anna Karenina"—are large, strong men of unusual productive capacity.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A VISIT TO TOLSTOI

II.

The Countess Sasha—Tolstoi a vegetarian—The Count on the war—A conversation and a siesta—A visit to the muzhiks cottages—Cleanliness not next to godliness—The village hospital.

IT was not yet noon when the door opened and a supple, laughing creature burst in like a whirlwind and ran up the stairs, filling the house with music. Soon afterwards the servant summone us to luncheon. When we went upstairs, the laughing singer with the voice like a silver bell met us at the door of the dining-room. It was the Countess Alexander Lvovna, or, as she is known in the house Sasha ; a blooming, beautiful blonde, with her father's brows above great, wide-r in blue eyes. The Countess Sasha does not speak German. She did the honours of the luncheon in the absence o her father, who did not appear, since it is his cus tom not to interrupt his work at this time. There fore another inmate of the house is present,

Circassian, a talented artist who had nursed the Count in the Crimea and since then has remained in the family. She makes herself useful now by filing the Count's correspondence. She speaks only Russian, however, so that she could take no part in the conversation.

Naturally we spoke only of the Countess's father. His health the preceding year had been very weak from the attacks of malaria and typhus, and even now the family was constantly anxious about him. For he does not spare himself in the least, and will not take his advanced years into consideration at all. For twenty years he has not eaten a morsel of meat. What appeared to be cutlets, which I saw him eat later, were made of baked rice. I cautiously led the conversation to a former inmate of the house, who, in an indiscreet book upon the family of the Count, made the assertion that the Count was only nominally a vegetarian, but occasionally made up for his abstinence by secretly eating tender beef-steaks. It would mean nothing in and of itself if a habitual meat-eater, after going over to vegetarianism in a general way, should now and then indulge the craving for meat. The secrecy of the indulgence, however, would be a piece of that hypocrisy of which the Count is accused by his most obstinate enemies. We received from the Countess, however, an explanation of the circumstances in regard to the German woman's book. Since the Tolstoi family, however, has long since pardoned the repentant authoress, it would be

indelicate of me to publish the ancient history. Leo Tolstoi is no hypocrite. He does not even consider it a duty to be a vegetarian. All the rest of his family, including the Countess Sasha, eat meat. Tolstoi finds, however, that a vegetable diet agrees with him; and he therefore adheres to it without wishing to convert anybody else to the same belief, as vegetarians are accustomed to do. The Count in general does not try to make any converts, brings no pressure to bear on any one. Everybody may live exactly as he chooses, even in the bosom of the Count's family. The Countess Sasha said, touchingly, "The only thing we can learn from him is whether a thing pleases him or not. That is enough, however—at least for me."

Nothing could be more touching than the relations between this last child remaining at home and her father. She hangs on his words. Every wish of his, spoken half-aloud, is quickly and silently fulfilled by her. Since the marriage of the Countess Tatyana she had been his secretary, and her white hands operate the typewriter like those of the oldest of amenuenses. She trills a little French song at the same time, and blushes to the neck when any one catches her at it and speaks of her sweet voice and accurate ear. Work for her father is a higher satisfaction to her. She subordinates herself completely to his thoughts. She used to be, like every one else, a lover of Shakespeare; but since she copied the latest works of her father, upon, or rather against, Shakespeare

she has been convinced and converted by his arguments. She said this without any affectation, with the sincerity of a child. It is to be seen that the deep tenderness of her love for her father springs from her care of him. She trembles for him. Perhaps she exerts herself, too, to replace all the brothers and sisters who have gone out from the home. Of nine living children—there were originally thirteen—she is the last. It is easy to see, too, how much the careful precautions of this daughter pleased the Count. When his eyes rest on her face, beautiful with the distinction of race and maidenhood, it is as if a ray of light passed over his face. He does this, however, as if by stealth. His love is shy, as is hers.

Soon after luncheon the Count sent me an invitation to join him. He had paused in his work to eat a few mouthfuls. Meanwhile we might chat. We again sat at the table. The talk turned on the war, against which the Count was just writing an article. He made the observation that the right-minded Russian was in a remarkable position. He contradicted all human feelings in wishing a defeat for his own nation. The bitterest misfortune that Russia could meet, however, would be the continuance of the present criminal régime, which demands so many victims, inflicts so much suffering upon Russia, and which, in case of a victory, would only be strengthened. Quite recently he had received a letter from a highly gifted writer, a certain Simonoff, whom he himself had

discovered and taught. Simonoff, a peasant, had been a janitor in Moscow, but on Tolstoi's advice had returned to his father, and had written a little volume of stories which Tolstoi rates higher than those of Gorky. Now the gendarmes have confiscated everything he has and—if I am not mistaken—have even arrested the writer. The pressure the Count says, is unendurable. I told him of my meeting with the Cossack colonel in Tula, and of the hotel servants in Moscow, who one and all wished to go to the scene of war for the sake of plunder. "Certainly," answered the Count, "the soldier must rejoice over every war; for war gives him for the first time a kind of title to existence in his own eyes. As to these house-servants and waiters, however, who are so ready to take part in the war, their love of fighting is nothing but common love of stealing. The Europeans have rioted and plundered shamefully in China. The people of the lower classes suffer from these things and thus all their evil instincts are awakened."

I told the Count of the officially arranged patriot demonstrations in St. Petersburg, of which I had been a witness, and in which alcohol had played its part.

"Yes, intoxication!" said the Count; "they need that to make people forget that killing, robbery and plunder are sins. If people only came to the senses they could no longer do these things; for nineteen hundred years of Christianity, however falsified, leave their trail in the consciousness

man, and make it impossible for him to rage like the heathen. But everything is done to suppress religion. Our upper classes have already completely lost religious consciousness. They either said, 'Away with this nonsense!' and become gross materialists, or they remain orthodox and do not themselves know they believe—stupid stuff about the world's being created in six days and lasting only six thousand years. This trash, which is taught the people as religion, that is to say, belief in the schools, is just as much a means of hindering religion as a superficial knowledge of science. Yet religion alone can free us from our evils, from war and violence, and bring men together again. Religion is at present in a latent condition in every one, and needs only to be developed. And this religion is the same for all; for the native religious consciousness is quite the same in all men. But the Churches prevent this unity, and bury this religious consciousness under forms and dogmas, which produce a sort of stupefaction, instead of satisfying the religious hunger."

I repeated the amusing remark of the Cossack colonel of Tula, that Tolstoi was a great man, only that it was a pity that he was an atheist.

The poet laughed, with something like pain in the laugh.

"There is always a certain amount of truth in which people believe; only it is misunderstood. To that good Cossack faith and orthodoxy are identical. My own sister, who is in a convent,

laments that her brother asserts that the Gospel is the worst book that has ever been written. The truth is that I made this assertion about the legend of the saints ; but it is misquoted. The authorities know what I think of the Gospel. They have even struck out of the Sermon on the Mount two verses which I put into an alphabet for the people."

"Who struck them out ?" I asked.

"The censor, to be sure. An orthodox Christian censorship strikes out of the Sermon on the Mount two verses which does not suit it. This is called Christianity."

The authorities give the Tolstoi family the greatest difficulty in its work of educating the people. The village school was suppressed, because reading and writing were taught there, and not orthodox. The instruction which the Countess Sasha now gives is quite unsystematic. Five children come to her at the old manor, and are taught the black arts of reading, writing, arithmetic, and manual training, in constant danger that some high authority will interfere to ward off this injury to the State.

"It is quite probable that we shall all be officially disciplined when my father is no longer living," the Countess Sasha said to us, with that calmness with which every one in Russia sacrifices himself to his convictions.

There was nothing pastoral, likewise nothing exalted, in Tolstoi's manner during this conver-

tion. After finishing his luncheon he rose and walked up and down the long dining-room with me, both hands in his belt, as he is painted by Ryepin. He spoke conversationally, with no especial emphasis on any word, as to one whom there is no need of convincing. It was the afternoon conversation of an intelligent country gentleman with his guest; the easy, matter-of-course talking in a minute of resting; talk that is not meant to go deep or to philosophise. To me it proved only the lively interest taken by Tolstoi in all the events of the day. He was not at all the hermit, merely preparing himself by holy deeds for heavenly glory, but an alert, vigorous, elderly man, who watches events without eagerness or passion, yet with sufficient sympathy, an apostle unanointed, literally or figuratively.

A half-hour's siesta was a necessity after the night spent in travel and the excitements of the morning. We rested, as did the whole house, in which at this time there was scarcely a sound. I do not know whether such stillness reigns in summer in the park, which now lay buried deep in snow. The house is very quiet now because it has become too large for the remaining occupants. A whole suite of simply furnished rooms on the ground floor and entirely empty, and is awakened to life only when the married children come for a visit. In the first floor, also, where the study and reception-rooms are, everything has become too large. After we had settled for our nap, we heard only the click of the

typewriter, on which the Countess Sasha was copying the manuscript her father had written in the morning, and the low song with which she accompanied her work. Then the house awoke again. The Count was about to take his ride. A fine black horse was led to the door, and the old Count descended the stairs with his light, quick step. He now had the Russian shawl around his neck and a broad woollen scarf belted about his body. He drew on his high felt overshoes and thick mittens, put the lamb-skin cap on his head, seized his riding-whip, and went out. A strange muzhik was waiting for him before the door. He had come from a distance to lay his case before the Count. Tolstoi listened to him, questioned him and then called the servant. As he was not a hand, the Count asked me to tell him to give the muzhik some money. Then a foot in the stirrup and, with the swing of a youth, the man of seventy-five seated himself in the saddle. It is easy to see even now, that he must once have been a notable horseman and athlete. For, though strength and passion abates in an elderly man, he who has once had muscular training does not lose the effects of it.

With a nod of the head the rider rapidly disappeared in the lane that leads to the main-road. It was already growing dark when he returned chilled through, and now noticeably altered. The cold had pinched his face; his eyelids were slightly reddened; eyebrows, moustache, and beard were

thickly frosted. The change was only superficial, however. An hour later he was more fresh and vigorous than before, held himself erect, and spoke with ever-increasing animation.

We, however, spent the afternoon in a walk in the village with the Countess Sasha. We had accepted her invitation with pleasure. She now appeared, humming, in a lively mood, slipped on a light grey Circassian mantle and her little high overshoes, wound a long red scarf about her, and put a grey Circassian cap on her thick hair. Nothing was ever more beautiful than this creature so full of health and strength. She took a stout stick from the wall for protection from dogs, and then led us out into the deep snow, in which only a narrow path was trodden.

Even the deepest reverence does not require uncritical adoration. Moreover, Tolstoi is of such phenomenal importance for us all that the narrator who can communicate his own perceptions is bound to reproduce them with the most absolute fidelity. Therefore, I believe I ought not to conceal the thoughts which refused to leave me during the walk through this village. I had to admire once more the deep humanity of the Tolstois when I saw the Countess Sasha, in her beauty and purity, go into the damp, dirty hovels of the peasants, and caress the ragged and filthy children, just as Katyusha in "Resurrection" kissed a deformed beggar on the mouth in Easter greeting after the Easter Mass. This absolute Christian brotherliness receives expres-

sion also in the whole attitude of the family. Countess Sasha says, quite in the spirit of her father, "The industrious peasant stands much higher morally than we, who own the land, and do not work it. Otherwise he differs in no way from us in his virtues and vices." This brotherliness, however, has this shortcoming, that it leaves the brother where it finds him, and does not compel him to conform to different and more refined ways of living. The Tolstoi family teaches the village children. They have established a little dispensary in the village. But they do not make their influence felt in teaching the villagers personal cleanliness, taking, say, the German colonists in the south as a model. I cannot conceive of the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana, looking as they would if the landlord were an English or Dutch philanthropist instead of a Russian; and I cannot believe, either, that the simplicity of manners or the warmth of brotherly love would suffer if the village looked, for instance, like those of the Moravians, which shine with cleanliness. To be sure the Count refrains from any pressure on the people about him; and if his muzhik feels better unwashed, as his fathers were before him, and prefers a dirty, unaired room, shared with the dear cattle, to one in which he would have to take off his shoes to prevent soiling the floor, the Count will not exhort him to change into a Swabian or Dutchman. Ästhetic demands do not form any part of the Tolstoi view of life—I believe that

for this reason it will find slow acceptance in the West.

There is the meekness and "lowliness" of early Christianity, there is an anti-Hellenic principle, in the village dirt of Yasnaya Polyana. It is true that Hellenism leads in its final outcome to the abominable "Herrenmenschentum"¹ of Nietzsche, to Nero's hatred of the "many too many." A predominatingly æsthetic valuation of the good things of life leads in a negative way to the immoral in conduct. Every final consequence, however, that is, every existence, is absurd ; absolute spirituality, indifferent to all outward things, as well as the heartless cult of mere external beauty. If we may learn from the muzhik patience in misfortune, we have also something to offer him in return for this, in ideas of how to care for the body, and of æsthetically refined ways of living. But Leo Tolstoi is an enemy of all compromise, and perhaps must be so. If the impulse towards the spiritualising of our life, towards brotherly kindness and holiness, which goes out from him, is to work in its full force, it must be free from any foreign admixture, at least in him, its source. In the actual world counter-acting forces are not wanting, moreover, and in some way the balance is always struck. The synthesis of Nietzsche and Tolstoi is really not so very hard to find. It was given long ago in the "Kahokayadin" (beauty and goodness) of the ancients,

¹ Theory that the elect few alone deserve to live and the masses are superfluous.

as well as in the rightly understood conception of the gentleman. If Tolstoi's human ideal wears the form of the muzhik and flatly rejects every concession to the claims of an æsthetic culture, the fact leads back ultimately to the repulsion which the St. Petersburg type of civilisation must awaken in every unspoiled mind. One perceives there that luxury cannot uplift man. Indeed, it is easy to come to the Tolstoi conviction that it ruins instead of ennobles him. An isolated thinker like Tolstoi reaches in this revulsion very extreme consequences. In any case the bodily uncleanness of the peasants is less unpleasant to him and his daughter than the moral impurity of the town-dwellers. The dirt of the peasant is for him nature, like the clinging clay of the field.

Suppressing our thoughts, we followed our brave guide into the houses of the village. With a few blows of her stick she put to flight the snarling cur that stood in her way. In the first house there was great wretchedness. The muzhik lay sick on the stove; beside him a stunted, hunchback child. The wife sat at a loom, surrounded by a heap of other children, flaxen-haired, and unspeakably filthy. Half a dozen lambs shared the room and its frightful air with the peasants, healthy and ill. The young Countess had a friendly word for each. One of the children was a pupil of hers, and was at that very time working at her writing lesson. This, of course, was praised. There was, however,

something obsequiously cringing about the peasant woman I did not like. All was different in the next house, which belonged to a rich muzhik. He likewise lay on the stove. The room was lighter, thanks to a larger window; but the floor was equally dirty, and the inevitable lambs were pushing each other in the straw in the same way. At our entrance the muzhik awoke and got up. His mighty brown beard almost covered his chest, which showed through his open shirt, and was covered with a thick crust. This peasant, however, read the paper, spoke of the war, and put a very interesting question. A little while before the Countess Sasha had been at this house with Bryan, who had visited her father. The muzhik and his visitor had become rather friendly. Now the muzhik read in the paper that the Americans are enemies of Russia. How about his friend Bryan? The Countess, therefore, had to tell him whether Bryan had now become his personal enemy. She reassured him, laughing. The peasant woman accompanied us out of the house, and made the characteristic speech, "I am ashamed, we live here like pigs; but what is one to do? We are so, and can't help it!"

In the same house is the little village hospital, which for the present is only a movable affair. This is kept really clean. The amount of illness is large. The peasants from the surrounding country come also, and the doctor often has to treat forty patients in a single office hour. He is said to be an able man and a good one—a matter of course in

Tolstoi's vicinity. Whether one wishes it or no one's best is drawn out here in the atmosphere of pure kindness. When I came back from the village, I was almost ashamed that I had held my breath in the peasant's room.

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CHAPTER XXIX

A VISIT TO TOLSTOI

III.

Dinner with Count Tolstoi—Kant and Lichtenberg—Goethe, Heine and Schiller—The Doukhobors—The publications of Gorbunov—Nietzsche—Gottfried Keller—Criticism of Shakespeare—The Dreyfus case—An embodiment of the moral consciousness of our century.

AT six o'clock we were summoned to dinner, at which the Count appeared. As entrée there was baked fish—for the Count, rice cutlets—then a roast and vegetables, of which the Count took only the latter; then dessert and black coffee. We drank kvas, afterwards tea, with cakes. Everything was very well prepared. A manservant waited at table. It is by no means insignificant to tell all this. The Tolstois do not live on locusts and wild honey, but like any other good families in Russia. We have, thank Heaven, outgrown the days when genius had to assert itself by extravagant conduct. Brilliant originality is entirely compatible with conformity

to custom in all everyday usages, according to our way of thinking. Conversely, all originality immediately becomes suspicious in our eyes when it labours to assert itself in trifles. "A wise man behaves like other people." The individuality of Tolstoi shows in no way the stamp of the idle wish to differentiate itself in each and every particular from other people.

No one will expect me to reproduce every detail of the conversation which began at dinner, and ended almost six hours later at the house-door. I certainly have not forgotten a word of it, but I cannot answer for the order of succession of subjects, nor even for every expression and every turn of speech. I, therefore, reconstruct from memory only what seems to me most important, and ask every indulgence for this report. It is as faithful as is possible to human inadequacy after such fatigues and excitements, and with rather tardy notes.

"I am now under the influence of two Germans," began the Count. "I am reading Kant and Lichtenberg, selections to be sure, for I do not possess an original edition. I am fascinated by the clearness and grace of their style, and in particular by Lichtenberg's keen wit."

"Goethe says, 'When Lichtenberg makes a jest a whole system is hidden behind it.'"

"I do not understand how the Germans of to-day can so neglect this author, and go so mad over coquettish feuilletonist like Nietzsche. He is n

philosopher, and has no honest purpose of seeking and speaking the truth."

"But he has an unprecedented polish of style, and an endless amount of 'temperament.'"

"Schopenhauer seems to me greater as a stylist. Still, I agree with you that Nietzsche has a glittering polish, though it is only the facile grace of the feuilletonist, which does not entitle him to a place among the great thinkers and teachers of humanity."

"He flatters, however, the aristocratic instincts of the new-Germans, who have attained power and honour, and he works against the evils of Socialism."

"What is the condition of Socialism in Germany ?" asked the Count immediately, with great interest.

"I fear it has lost in depth and strength what it has gained in breadth."

"You may be right," he answered. "I have the same impression. The belief in its invincibility is broken ; and its internal strength of conviction begins to weaken. It had to be so. Socialism cannot free humanity. No system and no doctrine can do that ; only religion can."

"The Church says that, too."

"But she teaches it falsely. What is religion ? The striving of each individual soul towards perfection ; the subordination to an ideal. As long as a man has that, he feels a purpose in life, can endure all sufferings, and is capable of any strain. It does

not need necessarily to be a lofty ideal. A man may have an ambition to develop his biceps to an uncommon degree. If he takes this as his particular purpose in life, this aim carries him along completely. To be sure, a man's choice of an ideal can be only apparently capricious. In reality we are all products of our environment; and after nineteen hundred years of Christianity we cannot with any true conviction set up ideals which contradict the real Christianity. We can make ourselves believe something else for a while. But the conscience will not submit to be silenced. Peace is attained only by the religious ideal of perfection and of love of humanity. Nothing is deadly except cynicism and Nihilism."

"I remember your metaphor, comparing a society without religion or moral enthusiasm to an orchestra that has lost its leader. It keeps in tune for a while, then come the discords."

"We are now in the first few bars after his departure. All will go well for a while, but then every one will get out of tune; the leaders first, because they are most exposed to temptation; then, class by class, the lower ones also."

"I believe a State is like a magnet, in which even the smallest particle must have its direction, or else the whole loses its strength and cohesion."

"Exactly. A State or a society, like the individual, is fit for life only so long as it feels as a whole, reason for being. This life principle of totality is, however, identical with the idea of the individual."

It is the stream that encircles each particle and brings it into popularity."

"People try to reach it by the ideal of nationalism and patriotism."

"That is no ideal. It is an absurd idea, which immediately comes into irreconcilable conflict with our better feelings. An idea that can and does require me to kill my neighbour in order to gain advantage for the group to which I belong is criminal."

"Yet it is dangerous to stand out against it. You had a controversy on that point with Spielhagen, who reproached you that you incline people to fling themselves under the wheels of a flying express train."

"I remember. But Spielhagen does not know how many people already comply with the requirements of the Gospel. The Doukhobors are such people."

"But they were obliged to leave the country."

"What difference does that make? They were able to remain true to themselves. That is better than remaining at home. And when we have once changed education and have taken the sinful glorification in deeds of murder out of the hands of our children, then there will be not merely thousands, but millions, who will refuse to sacrifice themselves, or have themselves murdered for the ambition or the material advantage of a few individuals. And then this chapter of world-history will end."

"But the school is a matter of politics, and the State or the influential classes will be careful not to permit an education that will make their lower classes unavailable for purposes of war."

"Certainly. And as long as there is a Church which, by its fundamental teaching delivers itself over as an assistant to the State, and which blesses weapons of murder, so long will it be hard to fight against the evil instincts thus aroused. But school, of course, does not end man's education. Later reading is much more important. We have, therefore, created something that might also well be imitated abroad, our 'Posrednik' books for the people. The thing that suppresses bad reading among the people is good books, especially stories. The books are sold very cheaply. Our artists design frontispieces for them. You must look at them in Moscow. I will give you a letter to the publisher, my friend, Ivan Ivanovitch Gorbunov, who can tell you the details."

He did so. With his kind letter I afterward looked up Gorbunov, in Moscow. Under the pressure of the Russian censorship, he accomplishes the immense work of spreading among the people every year several millions of good books at a cost of a few kopeks each, without having needed to add his original capital of thirty thousand roubles. He fulfills a duty, and at the same time a wish of Tolstoi in here calling attention most emphatically to this magnificent Russian enterprise, which should be an example for all other nations.

I took up the subject of Socialism again, and said: "In the West, Social Democracy is trying to solve the problem of educating and emancipating the masses."

"This is certainly meritorious," replied the Count. "The mistake lies in the teaching of the Social Democrats that some other organisation of society will automatically abolish evil from the world. The principal thing, however, is always to raise the individual to better morals and better ways of thinking. Without this no system can be permanent. Each leads only to new violence. People ought not to wish to better the world, but to better themselves."

"In that you agree essentially with our Moderns, who likewise take a stand against Socialism, and preach an extreme individualism. I see in that only a reactionary manœuvre, however."

"How so?" asked the Count.

"I believe that all wars for culture are always fought in a small class of thinking people. For the masses, provision for material needs is really the principal thing. In the thinking class, however, there are two parties; one, consisting of the feudalists, the plutocrats, and university-bred fortune-hunters, seeks for itself the privilege of exploiting others; the other consists of the idealists, who desire progress, that is, the education and liberation of the masses. Sometimes the one class, with its aristocratic philosophy of profit, wins the upper hand, sometimes the other. We do not yet know

in what tellurian or sidereal laws the spiritual ebb and flow will find its consummation. It is certain, however, that each party uses as a means of attraction the declaration that its point of view is the more progressive, and that the opposite is the losing side. The individualists, in their scorn of Socialism, render the most valuable service towards fundamental and complete reaction to the aristocratic-plutocratic party of exploitation, because they spread confusion in the ranks of the idealists by discrediting their solidarity. Nevertheless, they call themselves 'the Moderns,' and dub the advocates of solidarity 'old fogies.' The most modern thing in the West is a vile cult of the Ueber-mensch (super-man). Renaissance sentimentalism and the cult of beauty in bearing—æsthetic snobbism."

"All that originates with Nietzsche. The mistake however, does not lie in the principle of individualism which does not exclude solidarity, but, on the contrary, advances it. For the individual unquestionably attains solidarity in the very struggle towards his own perfection. The mistake lies in æstheticism, in the basing of life on the external and on enjoyment. Connected with this is the strangest thing of all, that this resurrection of the madness of the Renaissance has not made use of art. For all that is produced is nothing but pure silliness. I have not laughed so much for years at an entirely serious account of the contents of 'Monna Vanna,' or at the poems which our æsthetic

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and decadent, Balmont, read to me. None of those things are to be taken seriously as art. They will only confuse people through their absurdity, which could not exist if the healthy human understanding had not been brought into discredit. It is no better with you in Germany. Why is your literary product so low?"

"Who knows, Count? It has already been asserted that since 1870 the gifted minds have turned to more serious and more lucrative callings than literature. But I do not believe it. Science shows at present just as few geniuses as the arts. It seems as if there were laws of ebb and flow there, too. Sometimes a whole billow of inspired intellects is flung upon the earth, and then there is long drought. We have had no great writers since Gottfried Keller."

"Gottfried Keller? I have never heard the name before. Who was he? What did he write?"

"He was a Swiss, who inherited Goethe's free outlook on life, and wrote the best German novels, full of creative art, of racy humour, and of almost uncanny knowledge of human nature. He would give you much pleasure."

"How? You say he is in some measure a spiritual descendant of Goethe. In that case my enthusiasm would be doubtful; for I cannot say I especially love that Goethe of yours."

"Is it possible?"

"There are some of his works I admire without

reserve, which stand among the finest things that have ever been written ; 'Herrmann and Dorothea,' for instance. I once knew his dedication by heart. Yet the lyrics of Heine, for instance, make a deeper impression upon me than Goethe's."

"Pardon the remark, Count ; but in that case your knowledge of the German language is not sufficient for you to notice the difference in quality. Heine is a virtuoso, who plays with form. With Goethe every word breathes the deepest spiritual experience, and is uttered from inward necessity."

"The same thing is said here of Pushkin : that his greatness can be appreciated only by those who are most deeply imbued with the spirit of the language. I haven't any too much faith in all that, however. To be sure, a translation is only the wrong side of the carpet. Yet I believe really great works hold their own in translation ; so the form of phrase cannot be the only test for the value of a writing. But what repels me in Goethe is precisely that play on form of which you accuse Heine. Goethe and Shakespeare are both artists in the sense in which you reproach the Moderns. They are bent only upon æsthetic play, and create only for enjoyment, and not with the heart's blood."

"I could not admit that, Count, without repudiating everything I have ever thought and felt. No, for Shakespeare, in whom, through all the dramatic machinery, we hear the heart-beats often enough

As for Goethe, his poems are partly painful confessions, written only for the reason he himself gives :—

“Warum sucht ich den Weg so sehn suchts voll
Wenn ich nicht den Brudern zeigen soll ?”¹

“I find much more of this feeling for humanity in Schiller.”

“He is more rhetorical, appeals more directly to the middle class and contemporaries. But, like the overbearing political tribune he was, he has hardly entered into the joy and sorrow of the human soul.”

“And it is exactly this that brings him nearer to me than Goethe or Shakespeare. He is filled with a sacred sense of purpose in his work. He had not the cold ambition of the artist to be merely faithful to his model. He was full of longing that we should be carried away with him. Of the three requirements I make of the great artist—technical perfection, worthiness of subject, and self-identification with the matter—the last is the most important. One may be a great writer even when technical perfection, complete mastery of the tricks of the trade, are lacking—as, for instance, in the case of Dostoyevski. But, unless a man write with his heart’s blood, he cannot be a great artist.”

“I believe the heart’s blood doctrine would rule

¹ “Why do I seek the way so ardently, if not that I might show it to my brothers ?”

out all cheerful genre; and that meets perhaps best of all the fundamental purposes of art."

"You say that because you yourself see in art only a means of enjoyment, only play."

I could not have denied that this is really my conception, and should, therewith, have hit upon the fundamental opposition between our Western conception of life, as expressed by Goethe, and the exclusively religious-moral one of Tolstoi. I could not, however, compel myself to fill with a fruitless argument the few hours I had to spend with the honoured man. I should have been as little able to convince the apostle of seventy-five, whose ascetic philosophy is the product of definite conditions of civilisation, as he to convince me, the west-German, whose lightheartedness and confident belief in culture had ripened in the sunshine of the Rhine bank. I therefore evaded the point, and said :

"I have hitherto not taken your rigorous demand upon art as well as upon life quite literally, Count. I thought to myself that when one pulls up a horse suddenly, one does not wish it to turn round, but only to stop. I supposed that you wished merely to counteract other powerful impulses."

"No," said the Count, after a moment's reflection. "That is not so. I believe in the absolute correctness of my demands. I myself, however, was too weakly, or too badly trained to submit to them altogether. I cannot, for instance, keep from enjoying Chopin, although I condemn his music as an exclusive art, which addresses itself to the undi-

standing and feelings only of the aristocratically cultivated few."

"It seems to me an unattainable ideal that all men should share in enjoyment of art, and the requirement that the artist shall refrain from all work that could be enjoyed only by a limited number of especially cultivated men is impossible, and even harmful. It would deprive us of the finest works we possess."

"If the requirement is justified in, and of itself, it is quite immaterial what sacrifices must be made to it. Nothing is to be considered in comparison with truth."

I could go no further here, again. For I was talking with the man who repudiates his own immortal works because they are beyond the comprehension of most people, and, therefore, help to widen the gulf between the educated and the uneducated. I could not even make the objection that almost all learning must be condemned on the same ground, for it is well known that Tolstoi does not shrink from even this conclusion.

It is not, however, a matter of indifference to him whether people consider his views to be scientifically founded, *i.e.*, correctly reasoned out, or not. He said to me in the course of the conversation :

"I often laugh, and I also often grow angry, when people cast it in my face that my studies are not scientific. I assert in return that the whole of positivism and materialism is unscientific. If I seek

a science by which I can *live*, I find only that logical and consistent or scientific which contains no contradiction in itself from its premisses to its conclusion. Scepticism, on the other hand, completely denies every idea of life. And yet the sceptic wishes to live, otherwise he would kill himself. He admits, therefore, by the mere fact that he is alive that his whole philosophy is nothing for him but an idle exercise of the intellect, which has no bearing on his life. That means that it is not in the least *true* for him. I, however, seek the premiss from which I can not only live, but live peacefully and cheerfully. This premiss is God, and our duty of perfecting ourselves. I follow the consequence of that premiss to the end, and feel that I am right not only in my words but also in my deeds."

No truly scientific thinker needs to be reminded that Tolstoi, here, in the *à priori* assumption that life must have a meaning, departs from the fundamental principle of all scientific reasoning, namely the starting without a hypothesis, and, like Kant to whom he feels drawn not without reason, works with postulates instead of with conclusions. But who will not rejoice that the poet, who above all things was and is a passionate human creature, has saved himself from the despair of agnosticism by a bold leap to the rock of faith, which lies beyond science, and can neither be supported nor shaken by it? How many of the proud agnostics do secretly cast furtive glances at that rock, where the

would like to reserve for themselves a place against emergencies? And Tolstoi sincerely acknowledges that without this foundation under his feet, he would no longer be able to live. He needed this quieting as to the outcome of things to be able to follow his poetic impulse to look at the world as it is. Only entirely barren, abstract natures find their satisfaction in the voluntarily limited logical sequence of science, confined as it is to the empirical. All men of imagination, including Goethe and Bismarck, have had their share of mystic confidence in that beneficent course of the universe which in popular language is called God or Providence. This poetic faith has of course nothing whatever to do with science.

Under-valuation of one's own qualities, however, and enthusiasm for the complementary ones are familiar psychological facts. The poet Tolstoi wishes to be a cut-and-dried philosopher. He repudiates his poetry, and likewise speaks coldly, indeed, even with hostility, of the spirits akin to him, of Goethe and Shakespeare. There is only one opinion among lovers of art, and that is that Tolstoi, in the natural spontaneity of his characters and incidents, is to be compared with these two alone, and, in the abundance of his psychological traits, with Shakespeare only. Yet at present Tolstoi is engaged in writing a book, soon to appear, against Shakespeare and the study of Shakespeare. In our conversation he came back to the indefensible over-estimation of this artist.

"If people were capable of approaching Shakespeare impartially, they would lose their unreasonable reverence for this writer. He is crude, immoral, a toady to the great, an arrogant despiser of the small, a slanderer of the common people. He lacks good taste in his jests, is unjust in his sympathies, ignoble, intoxicated with the acquaintance with which a few aristocrats honoured him. Even his art is over-estimated, for in every case the best comes from his predecessors or his sources. But people are quite blind. They are under the spell of the consensus of opinion of multitudes handed down for centuries. It is truly incredible what ideas can be awakened in the human mind by consecutive treatments of one and the same theme."

I believe that one will not go astray in finding in the above-mentioned book against Shakespeare a prosecution at the same time of Tolstoï's campaign against the æsthetic-artistic view of life in general. His purpose is to overthrow one of the chief idols of the æsthetic cult. As far as the arguments on the moral side are concerned, he will certainly have a following. The son of a tavern-keeper, himself an actor, Shakespeare was certainly not the ideal of a gentleman. Tolstoï will, however, have difficulty in abolishing wonder at the artistic power of this most lavish of all geniuses.

Tolstoï dealt with the influence of general opinion again in another connection. He was speaking of the mischief that the newspapers do in the world,

but chose, in my opinion, a very inappropriate example of this.

"During the Dreyfus case," said he, "I received at least a thousand letters from all parts of the world, asking me to express an opinion. How could I have responded? Here I am in Russia; the transaction was in France. It was absolutely impossible to get a correct idea of the proceedings, for every paper reported differently. In and of itself what was the thing that had happened? An innocent officer had been condemned. That was an unimportant occurrence. There were much greater crimes committed by those in power. But the whole world took alarm. Everybody had an incontrovertible conviction as to the guilt or the innocence of a man whom nobody knew, and whose judges nobody knew. A thing like that is an epidemic, not thinking."

One must certainly travel a very strange and lonely road to fail to appreciate that in this very instance the press accomplished an enormous work in arousing mankind and in showing them the danger threatening from the Jesuits. The Dreyfus affair belongs to world-history as an epoch-making event. Perhaps the deliverance of the whole white race from the octopus-like embrace of clericalism and militarism is its work. And Count Tolstoi, who regards it as his mission to fight militarism, lives through the chief battle, and does not suspect it! One certainly ought not to forget that he is in Russia, where the incarceration of innocent men is

an every-day affair, and that the Russian papers think they fulfil their duty to an allied nation by treating the matter from the standpoint of Mélina and Mercier.

Tolstoï's antipathy to this affair does not come at all from any possible anti-Semitic feeling. He does not love the mercantile Jews, who have not the slightest trace of Christian spirit. He condemns anti-Semitism, however, in the most emphatic way. "Anti-Semitism," he said, "is not a misfortune for the Jews; for he who suffers wrong is not to be pitied, but he who does wrong. Anti-Semitism demoralises society. It is the worst evil of our time; for it poisons whole generations. It makes them blind to right and wrong, and kills all moral feeling. It changes the soul into a place of desolation, in which all goodness and nobility are swept away."

In regard to other matters, Tolstoï does not use strong expressions. He parries them good-humouredly, but decisively. When we were talking of the new romanticists, I used some severe language. I explained the uproarious applause of certain gifted but degenerate and perverse artists, as a cynical attack on the inborn moral sense, and said, speaking from my own experience, that I had yet to meet one of those devotees of immorality, whom I had not found on closer acquaintance to be morally deficient. When, however, I spoke of literary support of vice, the Count raised his hand to stop me, and said :

"Let us be gentle in our judgment of our fellow-men." Then he added, "Go on."

I had, however, gained command of myself, and begged pardon for my vehemence. I could not go on, however, for what had been on my tongue was only more bitter words.

He looked at me kindly, and merely said, "Thank you."

It is self-evident that Tolstoi did not mean by this to express sympathy with the Diabolics and other eccentrics. Moreover, he spoke flatly against art for art's sake, which he calls tiresome more than anything else. "Agonised productions of the search for originality, welcomed by idleness, and intended for the applause of the critics of so-called fine taste." He shrugged his shoulders over the fact that a monument had been erected to Baudelaire. He agreed with me, however, "I traced the interest in exotic suggestion in creative arts, as for everything eccentric and bizarre, back to the tendency towards an entirely external naturalism, which would completely rule out from art the personality of the artist. He returned again to his text.

"Without the deepest sympathy and complete identification with the subject no work of art can ever be produced."

He does not admit, however, that this identification with the subject is found in the experiments of these latter-day writers. He sees in them only a sudden change from the fashion for objectivity to

the fashion for subjectivity. When, however, I spoke of the good fortune of the Russian in not being obliged to take part in all these fashions, because he had already showed in his deep-hearted realism that it is possible to be true to reality, and yet be full of warmth and meaning, he again raised his hand to stop me, and blushed. I could not tell whether it was from modesty or whether he does not wish any longer to hear of the works of his "literary" period. I believe, however, that the noise of all this no longer reaches his ear. When I spoke with warm enthusiasm of the debt we all owe him, said that his art was a revelation to us, that through him we had first learned what poetic power lies in the simplest and deepest fidelity to nature, he stopped me in his gentle way. Only philanthropy is now a matter of any importance for him. Everything else is empty trifling. He said to me :

" You are still buried deep in materialism. You must see that you free yourself from that."

Nevertheless, he was good enough to recognise my honest purpose in seeking the truth, even though I do not succeed in finding it in all points as he believes he has found it.

I must certainly admit that in the late hour of the night, as he sat opposite me, his fine head leaning far back and resting on one hand, his glowing eyes making him seem, as it were, transparent, I had great difficulty in preserving a conventional bearing. Here was one of the greatest men of all times, who

had risen out of the purely human and had become a saint upon whom rests the Divine light. The kindness and tenderness of his voice, and the gentleness of his words are indescribable. He has the love and the dauntless courage of the prophet and the apostle, without their passion and wrath. It is doubtful whether any mortal has ever had more understanding of human weakness than he. He only combats institutions, never men. And yet no other man has had such influence upon our consciences as he, most compassionate of all judges in spite of the pitiless keenness of his vision.

It was midnight when the Count's sleigh took us to Kozlovka, the nearest station to the estate. In leaving I could not conceal the extent to which I was moved. When I think of the final moments, when the Count stood at the head of the stairs, and called a last word after me, while I turned to him to say goodbye once more and forever, it seems to me that I never in my life experienced anything more overwhelming. I carried away an impression that the whole hall was filled with the light of his blue eyes. Yet it was only a prosaic bit of advice for our return trip to Moscow, to give which he had hurried after us, after the adieu in his study. The Countess Sasha, however, stood in the starlight by the door, lovely as a goddess of hospitality. It was gratifying to know that the saintly old man was in the care of this lovely creature.

Under the twinkling stars we sped at a brisk trot past black forests and over the silent, deep-buried

fields. Within us re-echoed the saying of "Two things there are that always fill me reverent awe: the starry heavens above me the moral consciousness within." The man I had just grasped embodies the consciousness of our century.

THE END.

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ING AND LONDON.

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